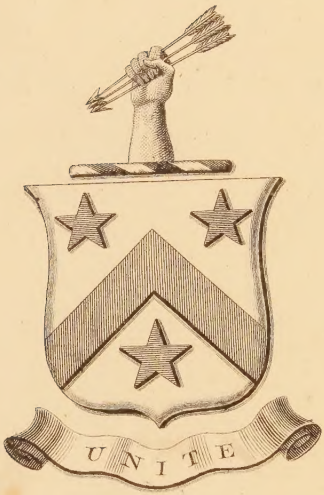

William Brodie

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THE DELAMERES

OF

DELAMERE COURT.

A LOVE STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE DUCHESS."

"The fair may find
In this one legend, to their fame designed,
When beauty fires the blood, how love exalts the mind."
DRYDEN'S CIMON AND IPHIGENIA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.
1852.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

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THE DELAMERES

OF

DELAMERE COURT.

CHAPTER I.

HYMENÆA IN SEARCH OF A HUSBAND.

"Oh, dear, what will become of me?
Oh, dear, what shall I do?
Nobody coming to marry me,
Nobody coming to woo,"

ENGLISH BALLAD.

It was about eleven o'clock in the evening of the day succeeding that which had witnessed the discomfiture of our hero's hopes, that two ladies were seated by the fire in one of the large bed-rooms of the old

Hall of Delamere. They had dismissed their abigails for the night, and now appeared in their *robes de chambre*, and that most beautiful of head-dresses, the cap which was the fashionable female night gear in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

The faces of women are like pictures. To set them off to advantage, they require a frame: and it is impossible to imagine any more becoming than that which was formed by the frilled border of Mechlin lace, whose great breadth, richness of material, and fantastic pattern, softened while they did not conceal the fair faces which lurked within. These coquettish adjuncts to beauty, worn at times when it is understood beauty is not visible, had originally been adopted, if we are to credit Lady Molesworth's reply to Horace Walpole, to enable ladies to appear to advantage in the event of their being

compelled by their house taking fire, to exhibit themselves at a moment's notice to the criticism of the male portion of the population. But it matters little when, or where, the attire was first invented; it never failed to form a very graceful appendage to the fair proprietors. What a contrast to the wretched skull-cap which the sex have now adopted, and which, forcing as it does the features into strong relief, can only be worn with safety by those whose outlines are cast in the fairy lineaments of Queen Titania. Alas for the dames who have faces more developed! Doubly alas for those whose noses, are like the tower of Lebanon that looketh towards Damascus!

The fair beings in *deshabille* were Lady Lacy and her daughter.

Lady Lacy was much such a woman as one might have expected. As Emily Delamere, she had been handsome in person,

and graceful in manner, but selfish and hard-hearted. Keen-sighted, like her husband, to her own interest, she differed from him in this, that she took less pains to conceal her objects, or to veil the mode in which she attempted to reach them. In whatever Lord Lacy did, though he never abandoned a project which gave him a hope of procuring an additional sinecure for his family or higher rank, he always endeavoured to conciliate public opinion by attempting to show, that the schemes conceived for his own interest, were imagined and adopted for the purpose of expediting some great public good. Lady Lacy, with the blood of the Delameres in her veins, and a bolder temperament, cared little what the world said or did, if their sayings and doings did not affect her success. A temper thus haughty and uncontrolled had written itself somewhat legibly, but though its traces were visible,

the face and figure for a woman upwards of fifty, still retained much of their early beauty. The person was tall, and lady-like, and the manner, movement, and expression, those of one who had been accustomed to play a frequent part in society, and who was conscious that she had played it well.

The daughter was about six-and-twenty, but possessed neither the beauty of face or of person which distinguished her mother. It was not that she was plain, or awkward, for she could hardly be said to be either; but she belonged to that very common sort of young ladies who, as Pope says, "are best distinguished by black, brown, or fair," and who, by their very mediocrity, defy criticism.

But it was not so much either in face or person, that the difference between her and her mother was most remarkable. It was in the expression of countenance. Ca-

milla in disposition resembled Lord Lacy; and as in him there existed a certain portion of jesuitism, so in his child was there the inclination, not to thwart or control a greedy or selfish disposition, but to veil its desires and their gratification, under the semblance of conventional propriety.

In Lady Lacy the blue eye was clear, bright, bold, and the mouth firm and decided. In Miss Lacy, on the contrary, the eye was sleepy, and the expression that of a perpetual smile. It had something about it of the pussy-cat character—something soft and fawning—something in short that suggested that though the paw was velvety, there was a sharp claw beneath the fur.

Such were the two dames who lounged by the bed-room fire. Some minutes had elapsed since they had been left alone, and yet they still sat silent, with their eyes fixed upon the grate, as if they sought in

its embers the solution of some problem of more than ordinary difficulty.

"Well, Camilla," said Lady Lacy, at length breaking silence, and with a smile, "I need scarcely ask the subject of your meditations."

Camilla nodded.

"What think you of him?"

"Oh, mamma, Frank is very handsome; I think I will marry him."

"Bravely resolved, girl; but there is another person's consent to be asked besides your own. It is possible he may not marry you."

"Oh, mamma, how can you say so? You recollect last year when he came up from Oxford, after taking his degree, he admired me so much that he was a perfect nuisance. Lord Salterton and Sir Harry Dawlish were always quizzing me about him. They used to call him my "Pastor Fido."

"Yes, yes, but that was twelve months ago; and at his age twelve months, as far as sensations go, are equal to half a century."

"My dear mamma!"

"Very true, love. When a lad first comes from college, he is always doubtful of his claims to be considered as a man, and to assure himself of the fact, ever attaches himself to some woman five or six years older than himself, and if she tolerate his attentions, falls in love with her from gratitude. You were Frank's 'Cynthia of the minute,' you stood high in society, and the boy endeavoured to establish his own position by attaching himself to your's."

"Likely enough, mother, but I care little about the reasons of his admiration. He did admire me, you cannot deny that."

"I do not," said Lady Lacy. He *did*

admire you," and the fair speaker pronounced the word "did" with great emphasis.

"Well, mamma, if he did, I suppose he does."

"The sequence, my love, is by no means necessary. Was this old worshipper of yours equally devoted to-day? Answer me frankly."

"Why, no, mamma. To confess the truth, it struck me that he was thoughtful, absent, almost indifferent."

"You are quite right. He was all three, and I will tell you why. He has learned his own value. He is the representative of a great family. He has the reputation of being the possessor of an immense fortune. And besides he is very handsome. When a young man possesses birth, money, and good looks, our sex generally take care that he shall not long remain ignorant of his advantages."

"Well."

"Well, Frank has learned his own value. Do you recollect how that silly little fool, Lady Glanbran always insisted on waltzing with him, and Lady Mary Tiverton, who rules that old Zany of a father of hers as if he were a child, had him asked to dine at Tiverton House once a week?"

"All this may be very true, but what is it to me?"

"Everything, my love. When the richest young widow in London, and the heiress of the Marquis of Tiverton chose to fling themselves at his head, he may naturally be excused if he were no longer grateful for the patronage of his poor cousin, Camilla Lacy."

"My dear mother," said the young lady pettishly, "you always had a talent for saying disagreeable things."

"Don't lose your temper child, but listen

to me. Frank now knows his position and his value, and you must throw aside your patronising air towards him. A year ago it was in its place—now it would only make you laughed at. That is if you wish to marry him."

"I don't care," said her young companion fretfully, "whether I marry him or not."

"Now don't be a fool, Camilla. You must marry him. He is the only chance left you. You are six-and-twenty, and though you have been eight seasons in London, you have never had an offer."

Camilla groaned.

"And what is more, you have made yourself so talked of by flirting, in spite of all I could say to you with that notorious *roué*, Sir Harry Dawlish, that there is no chance now of your having one; for you know that Lady Dawlish says everywhere,

that you are the reason why she and Sir Harry live so ill together."

"Lady Dawlish," said the hopeful young lady, "is as ugly as a she ogre; and if Sir Harry did see that I was prettier than his wife, how was I to blame for it."

"Don't talk to me, Camilla," said the prudent mother. "Giddiness in a young woman, who has to settle herself in the world, is perfectly inexcusable."

The young lady said nothing, but three or four convulsive pats of her feet upon the fender, gave evidence of the storm that was raging within.

"Come child," said her mother, "let us have done with folly, and talk rationally. Frank Delamere may marry well in the world, and he has made that discovery."

"How I detest that forward Lady Glanbran, and that sentimental fool, Lady Mary Tiverton."

"Detest them as much as you please, but listen to what I have got to say. They had certainly something to do with the change that has taken place in the respectful idolatry of your Pastor Fido as you call him; but I suspect that in your plans upon your cousin, you have a still more formidable rival."

"Ah," said Camilla suddenly becoming animated, "who is she?"

"Answer me first this question. Frank came last night from Lady Carpenter's."

"The dowdy widow of the Indian Judge. Well, I know that."

"Did he mention any one who had been staying there besides his hostess?"

"No one."

"Yet somebody was living there. Do you remember a tall, fair, handsome girl, who used to go about with Lady Torrisdale?"

"What, Miss Staunton! The daughter of the rich cotton-spinning man, who bought a house in Grosvenor Square."

"Precisely. That girl is now at the Hermitage. I got that out of Mrs. Delamere to-night, while you were with Frank turning over the prints in the portfolio."

"Well, what do I care where she is? and what is it to me?"

"Why, you little fool, Frank has never mentioned her name. Does not that show consciousness with regard to her? And can't you comprehend how one of the handsomest young women in England should be a dangerous rival to Camilla Lacy."

"Pshaw! She is not so good looking as myself. Besides, she is only the daughter of a cotton-spinner."

"It may be so, my love, but it is inconceivable how that girl has got on. Will you believe that she was actually at two

Queen's Balls to which we were not asked, and all because that greedy old crone, Lady Halifax, who from her speaking German, can do with her high Dutch Majesty what she pleases, wants to get the girl and her twenty thousand a year for her booby son."

"It is too bad," said Camilla.

"Positively gross!" chimed in her disinterested mother. "There is nothing so disgusting as to see the meannesses to which parents condescend to get good matches for their children. But now as to your cousin: you see, my dear Camilla, that you have many enemies to cope with. Frank came home, I am told, unexpectedly. He was in low spirits all yesterday. I suspect that that manufacturing girl has refused him."

"Refused him! Nay, mother, if things have gone to the length of a proposal, I may as well throw up the game."

"On the contrary, play it, and boldly, for the chances are so much the more in your favour. Many a heart is caught at the rebound, and men never appreciate attention from one woman so much as when they have just met with indifference or rejection from another."

"Upon my word, mamma, it is not very gratifying to one's vanity, to be employed in securing a prize which even a manufacturer's daughter has thought proper to turn up her nose at."

"Pshaw, child, if you would succeed in the world, you must estimate advantages by their real value, and not by the value which others put on them. To a portionless girl (for you know your father's sinecure dies with him, and he can give you nothing) your cousin is a very good match. I dare say he will have three thousand a year, and you will be very comfortable at Delamere."

"My dear mother," said the young lady, raising herself from her lounging attitude with an energy which marked her horror at such a proposition. "You do not suppose, that if I did make up my mind to marry Frank, I would consent to remain in this melancholy tumble-down old place. The very cawing of the rooks to-night has given me a nervous head-ache. I shall make him sell it, and buy a house in Grosvenor Square. I could not exist without a box at the opera. And then those beautiful jewels that the General got from the Nabob of Arcot, and which Mrs. Delamere showed us to night—they, of course, belong to Frank. I shall make Hamlet set them in a tiara. And what would be the use of them unless there were somebody to look at them?"

"Well, my love, when you are married, you can do with Delamere Court and the

diamonds what you like. But till you are married, I should recommend you to say as little of your projects as possible; as I have observed that both Frank and his mother are very fond of the old place; and I doubt much if the knowledge of your plans would not mar your chances. And, by the bye, that puts me in mind of a matter in which I have to find fault with you."

"You are always finding fault with me, mamma."

"Ungrateful girl! Is it not for your benefit? But it matters not. You must hear my lectures once more. You do not pay sufficient attention to Mrs. Delamere."

"I detest her."

"So do I. She has a disagreeable habit of calling everything by its right name, and does not make the allowances she ought for people of rank. But that

silly boy has a great respect for her opinion; so if you would win the son you must conciliate the mother. She was saying to-night that girls always look most modest in a cap. You had better wear a cap at breakfast to-morrow."

"Positively, mother, I will not. What would Sir Harry Dawlish say? He would think me a downright Becky."

"Camilla," said Lady Lacy, gravely, "I do not know what would be Sir Harry Dawlish's opinion, nor do I care, but I tell you what your mother would say, and does say, and that is, that unless you condescend to be guided by her opinion, she will leave you to manage your affairs in your own way. I have come down here at great personal inconvenience, for the purpose of giving you a last chance of settling yourself in the world, and if you do not follow my counsels, I give you fair warning that I

will immediately return to Portman Square, where you may play the *vieille demoiselle* for the future without my interference."

The young lady pouted, bent forward, leant her elbows against her knees, studied for a minute the embers in the fire, and once more threw herself back in her chair with a gesture of excessive irritation.

"Come, Camilla," said her worthy parent, "do not let us quarrel, and do not, to gratify a passionate impulse, wreck all your prospects in life. Besides," continued she, coaxingly, "I suspect that even Sir Harry Dawlish would give his sanction to the cap. You have become thin of late, and anything to fill out your hollow cheeks would be a positive improvement. So when Miniken comes to you in the morning, make her take that Valenciennes lace of mine, and the pink ribbon which is beside it, in the trunk. She is handy with her needle, and

in an hour will run up something tasteful and *dégagé*. I am sure you will look charming in it—so no more pouting, my love. To bed, and remember that much depends on to-morrow. I need not tell so clever a girl how to manage Frank, but above all things, pay attention to Mrs. Delamere, and recollect, never mention Sir Harry Dawlish."

And, having finished her observations, laudatory, didactic, and moral, the manœuvering mother dismissed her daughter to her room.

CHAPTER II.

A PICNIC.

"In the days when we went gipseying,
A long time ago."

ENGLISH BALLAD.

On the following day Camilla Lacy appeared in a cap, and with a matronly demeanour, intended to impress upon Mrs. Delamere that she would make the most prudent, and most domestic of daughters-in-law. Upon Frank, however, the tasteful conjunction of laces, which had been effected that morning by the active fingers of Mrs. Minikin, seemed to produce but little influence. During breakfast he was moodily

silent, answering only when spoken to, and then in the fewest possible words, and with an indifference of manner which mortified sadly the hopes of his aunt, and the self-love of his cousin. It was in vain that the former endeavoured to rouse his vanity by those undisguised compliments, which old women think themselves entitled to pay to young men. It was in vain that the fair creature in the lace and pink ribbons, though she said nothing, looked an eloquent approval of her mother's admiration, Frank still continued as silent as if he had spent his past life in the cave of Trophonius.

The meal over, his conduct became still worse. The ladies had proposed to visit a waterfall in a glen on the edge of the park, formed by one of the tributaries of the greater river, and it was intended that Frank should be their escort. But when after lunch everything was ready for the expedition, the

cavalier was not to be found. He had ridden over to farmer Jenkins's, (so at least it was learned from the groom) and would not be back till nightfall.

All this was annoying enough, but the fair schemers were not to be discouraged. For eight years they had been accustomed to disappointments, and the temporary check in no degree affected their resolve, though it did their plans.

"You see, my dear," said Lady Lacy, seated as before in their arm-chairs by the side of their fire, after the dismissal of their abigails. "You see I was right; your cousin is not the attentive swain he was when he left college. I doubt if we shall be able to detain him with us during the forenoon. You must make the most of the evenings. You must rouse his feelings of rivalry by speaking of the attentions of Prince Cassimir, the Austrian Ambassador, or the compli-

ments of Count Meerschaumrauch, the envoy of the King of Prussia."

The new plan of operations was brought into effect that very evening. Tea was over, and the ladies, including Mrs. Delamere, were busily employed in knitting. Miss Lacy fancied that knitting looked domestic and maidenly. As for Frank, the unconscious object of so much diplomacy, he was sunk in the capacious recesses of a Louis Quatorze chair. Fortunately, the poverty of the Delameres had prevented them redecorating the old Hall with that, in a cold climate, most absurd, and most inappropriate of all fashions and fooleries, open backed chairs and Greek furniture.

"I wonder," said Lady Lacy, to her daughter, as she opened the fire, "I wonder, Camilla, that we have heard nothing lately of your old admirer, Prince Cassimir, the Austrian Ambassador."

"Ah! what a delightful man," said her daughter. "How high bred, and what talents! He has, positively, the most beautiful moustache I ever saw in my life."

"And do you remember, my love, that at the great ball at Tiverton House, he would speak to no one else but yourself?"

"Yes, everybody was wanting him to dance."

"And do you recollect what he said?"

"Now be silent, my dear mamma, I really must beg of you to be silent; you make me blush when you speak of Prince Cassimir's compliments."

"Nonsense, girl," said Lady Lacy. "Why should not a mother be proud of her daughter? Do you know, my dear Mrs. Delamere," said the wily visitor, turning to her hostess, "when they asked the Prince to dance, he replied, 'No; so long as Miss

Lacy does me the honour to take my arm, (you must understand that Camilla was leaning on his arm) I prefer her conversation to any pleasure which you could offer me.' Was not that very flattering?"

"Very flattering indeed," said Mrs. Delamere, and she went on with her knitting.

"And what made it more so, as Lord Lacy said when I mentioned it to him, was that the Prince was such a great diplomatist and distinguished officer."

It was evident that Lord Lacy's opinion was not participated in by Frank. At least, it produced no remark. The young heir of Delamere Court went on with his book. It was provoking. Lady Lacy was compelled to unmask a second battery.

"Mr. Delamere, do you know Prince Cassimir?"

"I have seen him."

"Very distinguished man, is he not?"

"I don't know. When I was in Paris they always spoke of him as a muff."

"A muff, my dear nephew! what can you possibly mean?"

"I mean a fellow who can do nothing but dress himself."

"Oh! Frank, Lord Lacy says that his diplomatic talents are positively wonderful."

"I don't know," said Frank, laughing. "But in France they used to allege that Talleyrand could twist him round his finger."

"Oh! Frank."

"Nay, aunt, I don't know much about the matter, but it is notorious that he befooled him entirely at the Treaty of Campoformio."

"Nay, nay," said Lady Lacy, colouring with anger. "Some minor details might have escaped him. You cannot expect a man of his high rank to look into minute details."

"Perhaps not. But upon minute details

depend the interests of a great nation. And if a Prince of his high rank have not the industry or the skill to investigate them properly, he is unfit to be a great nation's representative."

Lady Lacy's cheeks flushed with anger, but she controlled herself. It was necessary to take other ground.

"But then his military talents, my dear Frank. What a distinguished officer he is."

"My dearest aunt," said Frank, raising himself up in his chair in astonishment, "he is even worse at that trade than at the other. Both Marmont and St. Cyr beat him in Lombardy."

"Oh, Frank! Frank! I am shocked to see you so dreadfully prejudiced. You would deny him all good qualities."

"On the contrary," said Frank, laughing, "I am willing to allow him many. The

fellow dresses capitally, and, as Camilla says, has an unimpeachable moustache."

Mrs. Delamere smiled quietly. As for Camilla and her mother, they crimsoned with passion to the temples and interchanged glances. It was evident that it would be imprudent to continue further the subject of Prince Cassimir. The standard of value which had regulated the opinions of Tiverton House, had evidently not as yet enlightened the savages of Delamere Court. Mrs. Delamere had watched the contest with a smile, and had secretly rejoiced at Lady Lacy's discomfiture. But as her two relatives were to the last degree discomposed at hearing their princely idol proved to be a thing of brass and clay, her good nature induced her to pour oil upon the troubled waters.

"Never mind Prince Cassimir, my dear Lady Lacy," said she. "We will not discuss the notables of May-fair. But if we cannot

give you here the magnificence of Tiverton House, we can show you what to my taste is better worth seeing. There is a beautiful water-fall in a glen in the park. You must remember it in your girlhood. But it will be new to Miss Lacy, and I doubt not after the late rains it is in all its glory. What say you to a pic-nic party there to-morrow. Frank shall drive us, and we will take a cold dinner with us and spend the day."

The idea was eagerly welcomed, and on the following morning after breakfast, Frank's greys and barouche came to the door. The ladies took their place in the inside, accompanied by a large basket well stored with, what Sir Dugald Dalgetty called, " provand." Frank mounted the box, and a drive of two miles brought them to their destination.

It was a beautiful spot. In the upper part of the park, the mountains which formed

the sides of the valley closed in rapidly, leaving scarce space between them for the impetuous stream. On one side and to the north, the larger river was joined by a smaller tributary which drained its mountain district and sought its way to its kindred waters in a succession of cascades. The largest of these was within a hundred yards of the river, and upon the top of the high bluff whose wooded sides bordered the two streams, had been erected a rustic summer-house.

It was built, in the very rudest style, of timber still covered with its bark; and was thatched with heath. The only decoration which had been attempted was in the interior. The building was in the shape of an octagon, one side of which was occupied by an open doorway, and the other two by windows, which looked respectively on the larger and smaller river. The ceiling as

well as sides was divided into panels which were wainscoted, if it be correct to use the term, with hazel rods of different colours, behind which the space between the outer and inner walls was filled with moss; while the floor was paved by pebbles from the river, which in their varied shades and fantastic pattern assumed a mosaic character.

The summer-house was at the very point of the angle formed by the confluent waters, and upon either side the ground sunk nearly perpendicularly to the streams below. The view from the doorway was magnificent. Beneath was the broad river with its wooded banks. At a greater distance and upon an isolated knoll, fringed with timber, was an old square tower, the original stronghold of the Delameres in the days of the Plantagenets. Beyond rose the mountain range, while in the extreme horizon was the ocean, seen through the faint mist occasioned by

the smoke of the little borough of Delamere.

The spot, on account of its extreme beauty, had long been a favourite haunt of the young people of Delamere Court, and thither the party took their way.

The day was spent agreeably, yet it did nothing to bring to a happy conclusion the intentions of Lady Lacy and her daughter. It was in vain that the fair Camilla played off those thousand coquetries, which every woman if she pleases plays well, and in which the fair manœuvrer exhibited the superior excellence common to those who have alike the benefit of experience and the self-possession of indifference. She affected the most intense admiration of the scenery. She spoke in raptures of a country life. She spouted Shenstone. She quoted Pope. It was to no purpose. Frank, as Sir Percy Shafton would have said, was not Bucolical.

When the sentimental failed, she essayed the impassioned and the practical. She insisted on descending to the water-fall, though there was no path to it, and it was at the bottom of a nearly perpendicular ravine. To attempt to gain it without Frank's aid was impossible, and the young heir of Delamere was in spite of himself obliged to play the Tityrus to the courtly Amaryllis. Then there were little slippings on the grassy bank; and little screams of affected terror; and convulsive graspings of the supporting arm; and occasional stumblings and falls which exhibited, as if by accident, a foot which might have fitted Cinderella's slipper, and a tiny ankle, and a well-rounded—but we fear we must stop in our descriptions—it is sufficient to say that Camilla proved in the most complete, but at the same time the most orthodox fashion in the world, that the statue-like limbs of the race of Delamere had lost

nothing of their classical outline by an infusion of the blood of the Lacys. And there were no trowsers in those days; as yet the traitress had not sprung into existence who, by persuading women to borrow the habiliments of the other sex, robbed them of half the charms of their own.

All this display profited Camilla nothing, and the only result of proving to Frank the matchless beauty of her ankles, was to suggest to her philosophic cousin the interesting subject for mental contemplation, as to the probable handsomeness of Mary Staunton's.

The young lady saw her failure, but as a skilled diplomatist she was well aware that the best method of softening a man's heart, was not by clouds but by sunshine; and it was, therefore, with a gaiety well enough affected to be mistaken for real, that she kept up without flagging the ball of conversation,

and the party sauntered home at an early hour to tea, after having passed what Lady Lacy declared had been a delightful day.

"My dear mother," said Frank, as after their visitors had retired for the night they were left the sole tenants of the drawing-room, "this will never do. I am quite willing to pay all attention to my aunt and my cousin, but I will not tolerate becoming a mere catspaw in their hands. So long as my grandfather lived they paid us no attention, and now from the way in which Lady Lacy and Camilla are perpetually complimenting me, one would almost suppose they intended to marry me against my will."

"My dear Frank," said Mrs. Delamere, laughing, "you cannot accuse Lady Lacy at least, of having any personal intention on your liberty, as it so chances that her worthy spouse is still in the land of the living."

"I am not quite sure," said Frank, "but I

know this, that she does nothing but nauseate me with praises from morning to night; and to say the truth, I would as soon marry her as her daughter."

"My dear boy, this is a very sudden change of sentiment. I recollect the time, two years ago, when you used to speak in raptures of Camilla's beauty and accomplishments. Nay more," she added, with a sly look, "when you used to allege as a proof of them, the admiration of your friend Prince Cassimir."

Frank coloured.

"Perhaps so," said he. "Your sex have an admitted right to change their mind, and why should not ours?"

"Nay, I am the last person to dispute the right," said Mrs. Delamere. "I only wish to learn what can have induced you to exercise it. What fault can you find with your cousin?"

"Need you ask me, mother? You whose

clear-headed intellect enables you to judge of things as they are.

"I thank you for the compliment, but in a matter which affects so deeply your happiness, I would rather hear your opinions than give mine. Again I ask you, what fault can you find in your cousin?"

"The greatest of all faults, her perpetual conventionality. Her thoughts, her dress, her acts, her manners, are all formed upon one model—the opinion of society. If society praises, she praises; if society condemns, she condemns; without any reference to that which she admires or reprobates, being really deserving of admiration or the contrary."

"I scarce understand you."

"I will explain myself. There are two men called Watt and Bolton, who are the authors of inventions which must, if the expectations formed of them be realised, add

immeasurably to the wealth and power of this country. Yet she probably never heard of their names, and if she had would most likely have listened to them with indifference; simply because what she calls the world, or in other words the three or four hundred persons with whom she associates nightly, has not condescended to affix to them its stamp of value. Whereas, that Austrian puppy of an ambassador, who has nothing to recommend him beyond his title, his coat, and his moustache, is a positive idol, merely because this same world of hers, though he is a bungling diplomatist and a blundering general, has thought fit to herald him as a Solomon and a hero."

"These are new ideas, Frank. You of all men, to admire Messieurs Watt and Bolton, and depreciate Prince Cassimir. There was a time when none was more ready to uphold the claims of distinguished men."

Frank coloured.

"I am as ready as ever I was to support them; but I would estimate a claim to distinction, by the proofs which individuals produce personally of their right to possess it."

"All this is most extraordinary, my dear boy; and by what rule would you estimate that right?"

"By their energy, their character, their success."

"Pooh! tried by such a standard, the heir of the Delameres might consider as great men, Lady Carpenter's rich neighbour, Mr. Arkinson, or our rich neighbour, Mr. Staunton."

"Well, mother. It is possible that the heir of the Delameres might enlist Mr. Arkinson and Mr. Staunton in such a category."

"Wonderful," said Mrs. Delamere, laugh-

ing. "I do not say you are wrong, boy, for though I wished not to give offence to the prejudices of your grandfather by expressing my thoughts, I have always privately been somewhat of that opinion myself. But I am curious to know the reason, which could have caused so sudden a change in you."

Again Frank coloured, but he said nothing.

"Will you not tell me—your mother?" said Mrs. Delamere, taking her seat beside her son on the sofa, and affectionately kissing his cheek.

"Not now. I cannot, I will not tell you now. At a future period you shall know all. For the present, I will but say this, that I am not disposed to fall in love with, or marry, any woman whose ambition is limited to receiving the attentions of those to whom society has chosen to assign a

two years' divinity, and whose ideas of right or wrong are limited to following out blindly what fashion has pronounced to be the appropriate morality, or dress, or manner of the hour."

Mrs. Delamere was silent.

"You say nothing, but in your heart I know you approve. I will not remain here to give Camilla or Lady Lacy the right to allege, that by constant association I offered attentions which I have no disposition to carry out."

"Yet, Frank, it will appear rude to your relatives, if you should be so much a-wanting to the hospitality of your own house as to leave them."

"I have thought even of that matter, and I would not willingly give unnecessary offence. But I can manage it well enough. I shall write to my solicitor in London to-morrow, instructing him to address me a

letter requiring my immediate presence in town, and where legal interests are at stake even ladies must give way."

Mrs. Delamere made no opposition. Indeed, she was well-pleased at the decision at which Frank had arrived. In her heart, she had a strong dislike to Lady Lacy and her daughter, and detested those publicly paraded proprieties which form so little evidence of the real excellence of the parties who affect them most. She made no opposition, therefore, and mother and son retired to their apartments.

On the following morning the letter was written, and three days after, as Frank had expected, came a large, oblong packet of papers, and a missive requiring Mr. Delamere's immediate presence in town. The interim had been spent by the young landlord in long and daily visits to Farmer Jenkins and his fellow rustics; and on the

fourth morning the master of the house, with a proper expression of regret, and a duly enforced apprehension of his continued absence, deposited himself in the mail and proceeded to the metropolis. With the departure of the heir of Delamere, the old Hall seemed to have lost its charm, and his example was speedily followed by his two fair guests. It was no use, as Camilla frankly announced to her mother, remaining any longer in a stupid, old country place, where the cawing of the rooks gave her a nervous head-ache.

The party most to be commiserated was never mentioned. There was no longer any prospect of the diamonds of General Delamere being wreathed into a bridal tiara; and Mr. Hamlet, the jeweller, had lost an excellent job.

CHAPTER III.

INDOLENCE.

"Sleep,
Voluptuous Cæsar, and security
Seize on thy powers."
BEN JONSON'S "FALL OF SEJANUS."

FRANK had gone to London, but it was but to learn the truth of Horace's old proverb, that men may change their locality, but they cannot change their temper or the character of their minds. He had escaped, no doubt, from the persecutions of Camilla Lacy and the blandishments of her mother. And so far so well; but he had not been able to throw aside, with equal facility, that irritation of

feeling which had made alike the blandishments and persecution painful.

The refusal of Mary Staunton still rankled. Had it been merely a refusal, it would have been less aggravating, for in such case the self-love of the young heir of Delamere might have attributed it to one of those thousand whims, which by the immutable rules of society young ladies have ever been allowed to possess and to exercise.

But there was no such safety-valve for his vanity. Mary Staunton, when she had declined his proposal, had stated frankly the reasons for her indifference—his ephemeral tastes—his want of steadiness of purpose—of high objects—of everything necessary to raise him above that butterfly class—the men about town, who held that position should be dependant upon the cut of a coat, and who bowed in cringing servility to the insolence of a Brummel, as in proper respect

to the mighty genius who had first conceived the brilliant thought of introducing starch into a neckcloth.

The wound was the more bitter, as he could not disguise from himself that there was something like truth in the cause assigned for the inflicting it. Had Mary been a girl who had lived all her life in the country, he might have attributed her peculiar notions, so different from those of other young women of her age, to her ignorance of the world, and her unacquaintance with those qualities which were thought necessary in society. But even this solace was denied him. He was well aware that Mr. Staunton's wealth and her mother's connexions had enabled her to see everything that was most distinguished in the metropolis, and the judgment which might have been scoffed at, had it emanated from the lips of a rural nymph who had never ventured beyond her

father's park, or the limited circumference which could be travelled by her father's coach-horses, became at once invested with value when pronounced by one who had seen too much of the denizens of the great world not to be able to judge accurately of their relative claims to appreciation.

For a week Frank brooded in his chambers, suffering all that misery which is produced by a first love when unsuccessful. The more he thought over the subject, the more he felt satisfied that Mary's judgment was right, and with this belief sprung up a desire to acquire the qualities which she estimated so highly.

"Why should I not," said he to himself, "become the Cimon of this modern Iphigenia? Why should I not be the orator—the statesman—the observed of all observers, which she hinted I might be, did I but possess the adequate perseverance?"

The idea was acted upon as soon as formed, and for a week Frank read the speeches of Burke and Erskine, and Sheridan, and Lord Chatham, and Demosthenes. Alas! impetuous passions are ever short lived, and the very violence of a torrent the sooner exhausts the capricious springs of its source. On the eighth day Frank only read six hours. On the ninth he had got a headache. On the tenth he threw his books upon the floor.

"Pshaw!" said he to himself, with an accent of disgust, "life is not worth having if purchased at such a price. I would not labour thus eternally if I could gain by it the Queen of Sheba, with all her knowledge and the wealth 'of Ormus, and of Ind' in her pocket. Heigh-ho! It is merely the want of society, that keeps me constantly mooning about that girl and her pedantic lectures. I must go somewhere where there

is stir enough to keep me from reflection. I must offer a visit to Hazelton Park."

Frank, as usual, acted on the spur of the moment; he wrote a letter to Lord Hazelton, signifying his intentions. A couple of days brought the expected answer, and the exhausted student started for Hazelton.

The Duke of Acton was Frank's second cousin. The wearer of the strawberry-leafed coronet, who had married the sister of old Mr. Delamere, had been for some time in the tomb of the Capulets. His son, the present Duke, had married into a family as distinguished as his own; and, attached to field-sports and to domestic life, he spent the greater part of his time in the country; even there more occupied than his delicate health would well admit in that daily toil which the poor never suspect in the rich, of answering numberless letters, and regulating the interests of an extensive tenantry.

The Duchess was one of those women who elevate their order by commanding the respect of society for individual members of it. Scarcely approaching to middle height, she had not what is termed a commanding person, or in other words did not possess great stature. But the Venus de Medicis is no giantess, and now, as in more classic times, men do not consider it necessary for beauty, that a woman should be a daughter of Anak. The forehead of the noble lady was lofty and well developed—the mouth, rich, rosy, and pouting—the large blue eyes bright, laughing, and intelligent. The feet and hands had the mark of high blood, for they were small and delicate, while the person, gracefully formed, displayed something of that fulness which, in their secret hearts, women ever desiderate, and men ever admire. But it was not by the charms of her person, universally recognised as they

were, that the Duchess of Acton attracted admiration. She had individuality, and though inferior to none in those graces and habits of society which are requisite in the high-born and noble, she had something beyond them—talents which commanded the respect of the other sex, and a kindliness of heart which in her own district won for her from the poor as from the rich, respect and affection. It was not that she lavished money in indiscriminate charity. Wealth often bestows, because it is less trouble to give than to refuse. But though she never withheld her bounty from those who really required it, she ever investigated, and with anxious accuracy, the justice of the claims of the recipient. Such discretion in the dispensation of her alms, could only be rendered possible by an acquaintance with its objects, and this in its turn demanded great labour. It was not withheld; and the maimed and

the aged, while they acknowledged the kindness, felt a double gratitude for the manner of its bestowal. Their ailments and their sorrows were relieved by their mistress—they were more, they were made alike the subject of her personal investigation and her sympathy.

The heir of the wealth of the house of Acton, was the Marquis of Hazelton. He was as yet scarcely out of his teens—but he promised well for the future, for he had his mother's talents and his father's easy nature. He was much attached to Frank. There was considerable similarity between their dispositions, and some follies committed in common had but riveted their friendship. For Lord Hazelton was not free from follies. Heaven defend me from that most ungraceful of moral monsters, so much admired by ancient ladies — an old head upon young shoulders.

In the society at Hazelton Park, Frank found the panacea he needed. The bustle of a great house, is the best physic in the world for a mind diseased. The perpetual arrivals and departures—the discussions at the breakfast-table, with regard to the employment of the day—the arrangement of the different shooting parties—the driving parties—the riding parties—of barouches and pony-carriages—the saunterings in the park with the ladies — the well-preserved streams teeming with fish for the elderly disciples of Izaak Walton, all contribute to make an autumn country residence, in one of England's feudal palaces, alike to old and to young, to women and to men, the most perfect paradise upon earth.

The stir did Frank good, for it gave him incessant occupation. But yet the life, joyous as it was, was not without its *dés-agrémens*, for even at Hazelton Park there

was something to remind him of Mary Staunton. Frank had seen two classes of women, and he had seen them in town and in country. By the former he had been questioned carefully whether he waltzed, or had read the Scottish Chiefs, or had seen Catalani in the last new opera. By the latter (who, having no opportunity of sharing in the dissipation of the capital, claimed to themselves publicly as a merit that absence from gaiety which, in their hearts, they deplored, and who, being more stupid, thought themselves more moral,) he was compelled to listen to eulogiums on their favourite clergyman—to the excellences of their medical attendant—or to the merits of some four-legged wheezing brute which rejoiced in the name of Beauty or Fidèle. Both styles of conversation had been equally exhausting. The tastes of the town belles were to our hero a matter of indifference.

He cared nothing for Catalani or the Scottish Chiefs. The three conventional sins of the female Pharisees awakened even less his sympathy. Frank detested alike Parsons, 'Pothecaries, and Poodle-dogs.

It was a relief to him, therefore, to listen to the conversation of the Duchess.

The house of Acton was politically powerful, and in politics, as in everything else, power to be retained must be continuously exercised. The Duke, from bad health, was unequal to this charge, and it had been in a great measure abandoned to the care of his accomplished wife, whose strong will, clear intellect, and, as was added by her enemies, ambition, well qualified her for the task.

Among the numerous guests who arrived daily, were, of course, the leading members of both Houses, who supported the same line of politics with the ducal family. Party ran

high in 1803, and the past and future struggles in Parliament were favourite topics of conversation. Frank had often heard them discussed ably, but it had been only by men. He now, for the first time, learned what a charm an educated woman can give to society. To his astonishment, he found that neither peer nor commoner amongst the visitors was better acquainted with the great interests at stake than his hostess—with their minute details—their past history —their future consequences. He listened and heard great truths explained, and with all that additional power which they can derive from the intonations of a woman's voice—the fascination of a woman's manner —a woman's powers of language.

"Yes," said he to himself one evening on retiring to his room, after a discussion of this sort, in which his fair hostess had taken a principal part, "I can now understand why

Mary Staunton refused me. Such as the Duchess is, Mary would be, had she the same rank and political influence, and I can well comprehend, after having accustomed her mind to the consideration of great and noble objects, how stale and unprofitable she must consider the trivial occupations of the tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee young ladies and young gentlemen, who vaunt themselves the salt of the earth, because they have a titled visiting list, and get their clothes from Stultz or Madame Le Roi."

The reflection was painful, but, as before, it was not lasting. The more he gave his attention to the conversation of the distinguished circle at Hazelton Park, the more he became satisfied of his immense deficiency in the practical knowledge necessary to make a man a great political leader. As before, he yielded to his habitual indolence. It is true that conscience occasionally whispered

to him, that this very apathy was the best evidence of the truth of Mary's judgment, and he endeavoured to drown the voice of the disagreeable monitor, not by deciding on that energetic course of action which would enable him to conquer the feeling, but in the more easy fashion, a career of pleasure which permitted him to forget it. He joined battues—he rode cub-hunting—he devoted himself to the service of titled dowagers, who chose the handsome heir of the Delameres for the Jehu of their pony-chaises, and who, like other dowagers, taught their young companion love, while preaching to him philosophy. His evenings were not better employed. Lord Hazelton had taken possession of an octagon pavilion some hundred feet from the main mansion, and containing three or four apartments. There Frank betook himself when the ladies had left the drawing-room, and there, as the

valet of the young Marquis confidentially informed the denizens of the housekeeper's room, the two cousins "carried on till all was blue," in emptying sundry boxes of Havannahs and bowls of cold punch. Frank was in a fair way of becoming a booby and a sot, for he already smoked like a Heidelburg Bursch, and imbibed his liquor in a style which would have done honour to Mynheer Van Dunk.

CHAPTER IV.

DISSIPATION.

"Boy, bid the liquid ruby flow,
And let thy pensive soul be glad;
Regard not what the zealots say,
Tell them their Eden cannot show
A stream so bright as Rochnabad,
A bower so sweet as Mosellay."
HAFIZ. *Translation by Sir William Jones.*

AMONG the visitors of Hazelton Park was a Mr. Rawlinson. He was the only son of the head of one of those great East Indian firms, whose colossal magnitude throws into the shade the smaller traders of the earth, and whose transactions, immense in themselves, take an additional character of magni-

ficence from the mystery consequent on the distance and the multitude of their Indian operations. Those behind the scenes, who did not judge of the wealth of a house by the number of its partners or clerks, sometimes shook their heads when folks spoke in vaunting terms of the riches of the Rawlinsons, and expressed a doubt as to whether any legitimate traffic could produce returns lucrative enough to enable them to pay twelve or even eighteen per cent on the deposits of their Indian clients. But the number of such critics was but small. The mass of the world is unable to distinguish between gold and tinsel, and the house of Rawlinson and Co. held, in their estimation, a position as lofty as that of the Childs, the Duprés, the Alexanders, and England's other merchant princes.

To say the truth, the style in which the family lived, amply justified the belief. Mr.

Rawlinson was in Parliament and had his house in St. James's Place, Mrs. Rawlinson her villa at Roehampton and her box at the Opera, while the young ladies possessed their French waiting-maids, their riding-horses, their jewels, and the other necessaries indispensable to young ladies who are in search of an establishment. As for the heir of the family, he too had his share of the happiness of life;—nine hunters and two cover-hacks at Melton, chambers in town, and a *petite maison* at Putney.

The young gentleman himself, if you can apply the term to a man of somewhat more than thirty, was a person of bad principles and good manners. Sensitive in the highest degree as to the opinion of the world, he did not the less a thousand times peril his character for the gratification of his passions; but he endeavoured to make that gratification safe by veiling his delinquencies under an

address somewhat grave and formal. A debauchee, and always, when there was a chance of a *tête-à-tête*, pouring his poison in a lady's ear—he never flirted, and scarcely addressed them in the presence of others. A drunkard, and occasionally for days extended on the floor of his room, under the influence of repeated doses of brandy and water, he nevertheless possessed sufficient self-control to live for weeks on a visit in a country-house, without exceeding his two or three glasses of sherry per day ; and where, if the family were religious, he would join in their devotions and give an intonation to the responses in the highest degree edifying to those around him. In more mundane matters, he was in public equally anxious to conciliate the suffrages of society, and advertised his scrupulous delicacy by vaunting at least fifty times a day his honour and his character.

But this Puritanism was only affected

before the world. To two or three kindred spirits he unveiled himself, and it was alleged that with their aid not unfrequent orgies took place at the villa at Putney, at which Bacchus and Venus alike used their best efforts to give to the guests felicity.

At Hazelton Park the *petite maison* was not spoken of, and the brandy untouched. Rawlinson even refused an invitation which he had one night received from the young heir of the ducal coronet, to join in the gin and water symposia. He was not, however, inactive. By his grave yet insinuating manner, he wound himself into an intimacy with the female portion of the visitors. He arranged the ladies' music—he carried the ladies' shawls—and escorted in sundry *tête-à-tête* walks, a mature female Puritan who believed she had a mission, and discharged its duties by inquiring into the spiritual state of good-looking young men. In short, Mr. Rawlinson

was what is called a devilish clever fellow. And so he was, but somehow or other, with all their talents these devilish clever fellows never manage in life to obtain in the long run a permanent success.

It so chanced that during the time of Frank's visit to Hazelton Park, he and the mercantile Joseph Surface had been thrown much together. Frank was taken with him. The junior partner of the East India house was well read, had seen much of the world, and narrated admirably. His sketches of the Meltonians and of his City acquaintance, differing widely as the prototypes of each might do, were hit off with equal accuracy; while certain allusions to the *petite maison* at Putney, while it left its debaucheries in the shade, gave it the graceful character of a Luciennes or a Trianon. All this was so well done, and with such exquisite art, that Frank became fascinated by it, and

when on leaving Hazelton Park, Mr. Rawlinson offered him a seat in his travelling carriage to town, his young acquaintance, with his feelings still rankling from his refusal by Mary Staunton, and ever anxious to seek forgetfulness in perpetual novelty, accepted it. Frank accompanied Mr. Rawlinson to London.

In the meantime there was a crisis in the affairs of England. The struggle with Napoleon had been recommenced at the conclusion of the preceding year, and the enormous expenses of a contest so colossal, drained the national treasury. It did more: it began to affect private credit. During the continuance of the short peace so inauspiciously terminated, many mercantile houses, calculating on the prolongation of tranquillity had entered into immense speculations, which nothing but continued amity among the great nations of the earth could

render successful. To such, the recommencement of the war was, in fact, a death blow. Amongst those who had involved themselves most deeply, was the Indian house of Rawlinson and Co. The establishment had, in truth, been for years in a state of insolvency, and had avoided bankruptcy only by borrowing from its Indian clients money at extravagant interest. But it had become evident to the heads of the firm, that a system so inconsistent with the true principles of finance must soon have a close. Ruin stared them in the face. To avoid it by awaiting the legitimate profits of trade seemed impossible. One expedient only could save them, and that was to put everything on the cast of a die. It was determined to adopt it. An immense speculation was entered into. If peace continued, success would be certain, and the consequent profits would afford the establishment the means

of clearing off their heavy responsibilities. If, on the contrary, war again broke out, their bankruptcy was assurred. But even this was scarcely deteriorating their present position. It was only advancing by a year or two, a fate which in the ordinary course of affairs was perchance more distant, though not less certain.

The plan was acted on. During the short peace of Amiens, the firm of Rawlinson and Co. embarked in its dangerous enterprise. The partners made, and to an enormous extent, a time purchase in the funds. If the funds had risen, they would have been rich. With the renewal of hostilities, consols fell, and they were beggars.

Such was the news which greeted Mr. Rawlinson, Jun., on his arrival in London, and it was in fact the announcement of its probable advent which had produced his return. However, so perfect was his self-

possession, that to outward eyes he exhibited neither sorrow nor anxiety. He had great confidence in his own fortunes. The state of public affairs—of the ministry—of Europe, were to the last degree changeful. The war of to-day might be the peace of to-morrow, and could the evil hour be delayed for a few months, it was possible to hope that amid the varying humours of society its arrival might be indefinitely averted.

Yet even this delay could only be purchased at an immense price, and young Rawlinson was informed on his first appearance in the counting-house, that forty thousand pounds would be required, and on the instant, to enable the house to pay their differences, and to ward off immediate insolvency.

The sum was large, but the heir of the establishment undertook to find it.

It was upon the second day after, that a

party was assembled in the villa at Putney. It was small, but its members were select. There was Mr. Lysoms, the artist, who, with a pencil as graceful as that of Retsch, was able, by a few magic touches, to call into existence, and with equal fidelity, all the varieties of English life — the bargeman redolent of beer and tobacco—the cockney in his Sunday attire, looking as if the world was too small for his dignity—the *point device* guardsman—the smart milliner—the Billingsgate fish-fag, with basket on head and dudeen in mouth—and the fairest and most beautiful of earth's daughters, the high-born young Englishwoman in her costume of ball or opera. There too was Mr. Quintin, the actor, a man of infinite jest; and Mr. Tarleton, the author, who dissected the follies of society with the pleasantest voice and the most philanthropic manner imaginable. And there also was our friend Frank Delamere.

The lady part of the assemblage was composed of the most celebrated actresses of the day. One was distinguished for her beauty, another for her wit, a third for her grace; a fourth, who represented not Thalia, but Melpomene, and who like Mademoiselle Rachel, could thrill and awe at pleasure, had laid aside the buskin for the night, and condescended to prove that she could make men smile as well as weep.

The table was covered with the richest manufacture of Rundle and Hamlet, of Wedgewood and Copeland, and the cellars of the London Docks had been ransacked for their rarest Amontillado and Château Margot, their Epernay and Côte d'Or. There too was that most seducing of liquors for female lips, sparkling Burgundy in its long stone Seltzer-water-like bottles. The viands were excellent—the juice of the grape circulated rapidly, and the wit unshackled by the minor

conventionalities of society would have done honour to the table of Richelieu, or the private suppers of the Regent Orleans. It was not less brilliant. It was scarce less free. These were golden moments. Ah! why should golden moments be ever the most rapid in their flight? The hours passed on, and with them the guests departed. All except Frank Delamere. He had been asked to remain at Putney for the night.

Frank was not intoxicated; yet his mind felt as if it had been under the influence of intoxication. The poet has written, after seeing a fine statue, of being dazzled and drunk with beauty; and Frank, who for four hours had been looking at creatures not less lovely, and who, in addition to all the charms of inanimate marble, possessed sparkling eyes, and rosy lips, and thoughts that breathed, and words that burned, might be pardoned if he more than shared the poet's infatuation.

The scene that had just passed was too gorgeous to be lost, even by its absence, and the young Sybarite sunk down in an arm-chair, and burying his face in his hands, endeavoured to recall it in memory.

Some one touched his shoulder. It was the only remaining tenant of the chamber—young Rawlinson.

"You are meditating on the past," said he.

"I am. Does it not deserve the recollection?"

"One of the *noctes cœnæque deûm*," said his companion, with a sneer.

"And was it not? Could the table of Apicius be better spread, or more honoured."

"Yes; I doubt if the Falernian were as luscious as the Burgundy."

"Pshaw! I thought not of the liquor, but of those who quaffed it. Juvenal had no keener insight into human nature than Tarleton; and I doubt if Apelles could have

improvised a sketch so well as Lysoms. And then the women. The dames of the Palatine might have been possibly as beautiful, but they had no Aspasias amongst them. They wanted the divine essence, and you would have sought in vain to gather from their lips the pearls and the jewels, which, for the last few hours, your fair guests have been scattering so lavishly."

Rawlinson sighed.

"What, my friend," said Frank, with enthusiasm, "is there a crumple in your rose-leaf? You have everything man needs to render him happy, and you sigh."

"It may be that I have good reason."

"Pooh, pooh, man! take another draught of the sparkling Burgundy."

"My cares, unfortunately, are beyond even its cure."

"Come, then, if you will not find consolation in the bottle, find, at least, truth. *In*

vino veritas, is an old proverb. Prove the correctness of the adage, and share your sorrows with a friend."

"And to what end? How should I gain by throwing the gloom of my spirit upon yours. It would but dispel the enchantment of your prospect without adding a gayer colouring to mine."

"You are wrong. A friend is of little value if he lend not his aid in the shadow as in the sunshine."

The accomplished dissembler appeared to hesitate.

"Come, come," said his honest-hearted companion, "out with it, man. You have got yourself into some difficulty. I must help to free you from it."

"It is a heavy one."

"So much the greater the necessity for my aid."

Again Mr. Rawlinson appeared embarrassed.

"Pshaw, man! this is weakness," said Frank. "I would not offer you my assistance if I were not prepared really and effectively to lend it."

"My dear fellow," said his hypocritical host, in a low tone of the most intense affection, "it positively pains me to trouble you with my annoyances. But as you insist upon it, I must inform you how things are. You know," continued he, "our house is immensely rich, but that our transactions are almost entirely limited to our Indian connection. In the course of business we have entered into engagements which, though they may appear formidable to you, are, to us, a mere trifle — some forty thousand pounds. These engagements must be met in a few days. We have been expecting for the last month remittances from India, more than sufficient for the purpose. But the war, and the French cruizers, as you well know, make

the arrival of single vessels impossible, and the motions of fleets under escort are necessarily slow. In a month, or six weeks, we shall, of course, be amply provided; but the difficulty is to find funds for the interim."

"And can I not help you?" said Frank.

"Why, no. I don't see how that is possible, for I suppose you have only Delamere Court."

"Why, I have some few hundred pounds," said Frank, "the residue of my rents, but of course the bulk of my property is Delamere Court."

"You see, my good fellow, you cannot help me."

"It is unfortunate," said his young guest, in a tone which spoke the heartiness of his sympathy, "for I assure you, that I would if I could."

There was a silence for about a minute.

"And now I think of it," said the mercantile Machiavel, with the air of a man who

had just been inspired with a new idea, "there is a way in which it is possible it may be managed."

"And what is that?" said Frank, eagerly.

"Why, you know," said his host, "the Delameres, of Delamere Court, are one of the first families in England, and their rank and wealth universally recognised. Everybody knows that you are the representative of the name, and the proprietor of its princely inheritance. I do not doubt that I could raise the money upon your signature."

"That would be delightful," said the unconscious dupe.

"But, perhaps," said his wily companion, "you would object to give it."

"On the contrary, I should be most happy."

"Well, my dear fellow, you are very kind, and I will accept your handsome offer without ceremony, for between friends it is a mere form. You have only to put your name

upon a bit of paper, and you will hear no more about the matter."

Mr. Rawlinson struck while the iron was hot. He took from a cabinet in the side of the room some blank bills, which, considering the conversation was improvised, were by a singular piece of good fortune near at hand, and Mr. Francis Delamere accepted obligations for thirty-nine thousand eight hundred and seventy-nine pounds sixteen shillings and fourpence.

It was astonishing how accurate was the business-like memory of Mr. Frederick Rawlinson.

CHAPTER V.

A DORCAS MEETING.

"In various talk the instructive hours they passed.
Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last."

POPE.

It was some time after the events which we have just now chronicled. The hour was approaching to mid-day, and our old friend Mrs. Drugget was seated in her drawing-room. There was evidently something about to take place of more than ordinary importance, for the lady was attired in her handsomest morning dress, while a cap, whose lace smacked of the Mechlin loom, and which, if it had paid the duties, must have cost an immense sum, decorated her

upper person. With all this finery, the costume appeared as if it affected the staid and the formal. The gown, though of the richest Lyons silk, was of a grave colour, and though it did not come up to the throat, was a shade more decent in its display of neck than the usual dress of the day, while the very cap, whose richness we have commemorated, instead of flaunting abroad with gay ribbons, was quietly trimmed, and had its broad laces brought down close upon the face. If Mrs. Drugget then from the richness of her costume was coquetishly dressed, it was evidently the coquetry of devotion—that carefully arranged *négligé* adopted by the fair sex when collected for objects of charity, or a serious character, and which enables them at the same time, while speaking of the angels of the next world, to prove to any male creatures who may chance to be present, that there are angels also in this.

Everything, too, in the apartment was in consonance with the demi-religious habiliments of its mistress. The blinds were drawn down—the piano closed, and its oilskin hood pulled over it. "The Scottish Chiefs," "Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy," "The Peruvian Princess," "The Adventures of Peter Wilkins," "The Mysteries of Udolpho," "The Castle of Otranto" and "Evelina"—the fashionable novels of the time, and in which Mrs. Drugget's soul delighted, were carefully put out of sight, while in their place were ostentatiously paraded sermons or methodistical tracts, and other esteemed books of a devotional character. In the middle of the room was a large oblong table, around which were placed seats — an elbow-chair occupying either end, while in front of each was a small portfolio containing writing-paper and a pen.

In the centre of the table was an ink-

stand, and on either side were three or four specimens of dresses, tiny enough in their proportions to have fitted the inhabitants of Lilliput. They were chiefly caps and long robes. It was in fact a Dorcas meeting, or rather *the* Dorcas meeting of the royal borough of Delamere, of which Mrs. Drugget was President, and Miss Martha Blount the second in authority; for the venerable spinster being, from the unpardonable want of taste in the male sex, unfurnished with objects of maternal tenderness in her own person, found a vent for her superabundant female sympathies in looking after the productions of others.

At last twelve o'clock struck, and immediately after sounded in quick succession the raps which announced the arrival of the fair Samaritans. They were received by the mistress of the house with the decorum which such an occasion required. The

voices of hostess and visitor were alike low—the expression of their faces grave—and the pressure of their hands measured. The very smile which illuminated their countenances as they recognised each other had a subdued and placid character.

The room filled at length. There were in all eight aide-de-camps of the goddess Lucina. Mrs. Drugget and Miss Blount took the chair, and Mrs. Tom Smith with Mrs. Simpson, Mrs. Hopkinson, and other less distinguished female notorieties of Delamere filled the remaining seats.

The business of the day was commenced by Mrs. Drugget, who in a few words declared the sitting to be opened. This simple introduction did not appear to satisfy Miss Blount. The worthy spinster fancied herself to be literary, for she had studied Shenstone and looked into Pope. She felt too, that if she had been a man, she would have been an

orator, and was not willing that a mere unhappy difference of sex should prevent society from receiving the benefit of the powers which she possessed. On ordinary occasions, the presence of the other sex, or rather the conventionalities of society checked her eloquence, and she eagerly seized an opportunity like the present which gave her the means of holding forth to a petticoated audience, whom she considered her inferiors in rank, and who certainly were so in the *facundia verborum*. She therefore replied to the telegraphic glance of Mrs. Drugget, and raising herself bolt upright in her chair, after a slight cough, addressed her audience as follows :

" Ladies :—This is the tenth meeting of the Delamere Dorcas Society, and in the silence of the President, I may be permitted to make a few congratulatory remarks upon the success of our past labours. We have hitherto been enabled to relieve much misery,

supported as we have been by that kindliness of heart which has ever been so remarkable in the inhabitants of the town of Delamere. (Hums of applause.) And we have endeavoured, and successfully, to diminish that vast amount of misery which, since the days of our first parents, has been brought upon woman by the follies and the vices of that other sex, whose gross, selfish, unfeeling conduct, cannot be too generally reprobated. (Marks of dissent.) I am unfortunate enough in not carrying with me the opinions of all present, but the great truth which I have announced is too universally recognised to be disputed by any who like myself ever look at facts and examine men with a critical eye. (Suppressed titters.) But I will not detain you longer. Our past meetings have been conducted with remarkable unanimity, perfect courtesy, and an exercise of the charities of life, not only in conduct, but in opinion—

courtesy and charities which I feel confident on this, as on all former occasions, will continue to exercise their undiminished and Christian-like influence."

The fair audience, who would have listened to the address with impatience, had they not been agreeably employed in studying the shape and fashion of each other's bonnets, immediately proceeded to business.

Mrs. Drugget, the President, resumed.

The worthy dame announced that the subscriptions since last meeting amounted to four pounds fifteen shillings, but that the demands upon their bounty were likely to be more than sufficient to exhaust the fund.

"And what, Mrs. Drugget," said Miss Blount, "what call is there upon us?"

"Why, there is Job Johnstone's wife going to have another child."

"Her twelfth, as I am a Christian woman," said the fair Martha, in horror.

"Poor body," said Mrs. Tom Smith, "she has a good claim upon our charity, and besides, she has got a letter of recommendation from the Curate, Mr. Martin."

"Oh, dear!" broke in one of the guests, "that puts me in mind of something which I have just heard, that will astonish you."

"What is it? What is it?" responded, in eager chorus, the female conclave.

"You must know, ladies," said the speaker, "that last night I went to take a dish of tea with old Mrs. Oxley."

"And capital tea you got, I'll be bound for it," said the President, "for Mr. Drugget tells me that Mrs. Oxley buys a quarter of a chest at a time, and nothing will serve her but his very primest Souchong, with it may be three or four pounds of orange Pekoe, just to flavour it. So I warrant you had the best of tea."

"Never mind the tea," screamed the im-

patient Sisters of Charity, "let us hear what she told you."

"You would never guess, if you tried at it for a year. Esther Martin is going to be married to Colonel Spencerton."

"Well I never!" was the universal reply, given forth with a unanimity of intonation which would have done honour to the chorus of a German opera.

Miss Martha Blount was the first to recover from the momentary paralysis produced by the news.

"What a marriage!" said she. "What luck! What a fortunate girl!"

"Fortunate, do you call her?" said Mrs. Drugget. "Why, the man is seventy."

"What of that?" said Miss Martha. "Won't she have her own carriage, and that the handsomest in the county?"

"Carriage, indeed!" retorted Mrs. Drugget, in indignation. "I trow that the one

that would suit him best would be that with a death's head and cross bones on the sides, and six black horses before it. Why, the man has got one foot in the grave already. Esther Martin would have done far better with a handsome fellow like young Stubbs, who I know is dying for her."

"Handsome fellow! You are always thinking of handsome fellows, Mrs. Drugget," said Miss Martha. "Permit me to say, you have very coarse ideas on the subject of matrimony."

"My ideas are better than yours," retorted the grocer's wife, with a face of crimson. "I would at least buckle her to a man—you would marry her to a yellow chariot."

The old maid tossed her head in the air, and her sharp features did their best to assume an expression of indignant contempt.

"It is always the same story with you, Mrs. Drugget," said she. "I suppose that,

with your mode of judging of such matters, you would have thought that Esther had done better if, instead of making a prudent choice, she had behaved like that slut Nancy Hopper, the milliner, who has, I hear, gone off with that scamp, Jack Tomlinson."

"Poor ruined girl," muttered, in half soliloquy, the kind-hearted Mrs. Tom Smith.

"Poor ruined girl, indeed!" replied the fiery spinster. "I don't doubt that Mrs. Drugget will find excuses for her too."

"And why should I not?" said the female president.

"Because it would not be just."

"Pooh, pooh!" said Mrs. Drugget, "that is the very reason I should find excuses for her. This is a charity, and I suspect that charity means giving to those who have just claim to it a little money—or it may be a little pity too, Miss Martha. So I'll

venture, notwithstanding your sneer, to find an excuse for Nancy Hopper."

"Pshaw!" said Miss Blount, contemptuously.

"And pshaw! back to you again," said the indignant Mrs. Drugget. "The fact is, you are a single woman, and I never saw one of you yet, that did not press hard on a poor girl's follies. It's only when one gets married that one learns to look at these little misfortunes in a sensible point of view."

Miss Martha was nearly suffocated with indignation, less from the imputation on her judgment than on her celibacy. She could only gasp forth:

"What monstrous principles."

"The principles are good enough, Miss Blount. They merely go to this, that I won't throw a stone at one who, I'll be bound to say, is miserable enough already. Besides, it is so natural that the wench should have

listened to a few soft speeches. Men have such wheedling ways."

"One would suppose you spoke from experience, Mrs. Drugget."

"You would give your ears if you were able with truth to say the same thing, Miss Blount. But the fact is, you are angry that the men say civil things to others, because they never said any to yourself."

"Mrs. Drugget, I cannot tolerate such language."

"Then you may lump it, for anything I care, Miss Blount."

The indignant Vestal sprung to her feet.

"I will not remain here for another moment to be so insulted," and she was about to hurry from the room, when a rap was heard at the door. It was not, however, one of those measured raps which had intimated the approach of the fair Samaritans. On the contrary, it was prolonged, loud, almost violent.

"God bless my heart!" said the hostess, "who can that be?"

"It is a gentleman's rap," said Miss Blount, as she arrested her steps on her way to the door.

"That woman thinks of nothing but men," whispered the hostess in confidence to Mrs. Smith. "But she is right, it is a man's rap."

Miss Blount's ears had not deceived her, for immediately after a heavy step was heard approaching.

"Oh, dear!" screamed the sensitive Martha, "I declare it is a gentleman's foot on the stair; and the baby-clothes on the table! I shall die with shame, if he sees the baby-clothes." And the virtuous spinster, in an agony of modesty which would have done honour to a college of Vestal Virgins, seized with a convulsive grasp the Lilliputian garments, and hurrying to the side of the room, hid them under the sofa. She had

scarcely secured from observation the anti-Malthusian evidences when the door opened, and Mr. Toppings entered.

The worthy nameson of royalty was fluttered and breathless.

"I beg your pardon, ladies," said he. "I really should not have intruded at this hour, but for the astounding intelligence I have to communicate. Have you heard the news?"

"No, no, no," said half-a-dozen voices in chorus, "pray tell us it?"

"Young Mr. Delamere is ruined."

"What!" said his fair auditresses, in a breath. "Impossible."

"But too true. I have it from the best authority. I have just had a letter from an old college friend in London, who tells me that it is the talk of the clubs."

"So—so, this is the end of the four-in-hand," said Mrs. Hopkinson.

"Gambling, no doubt," chimed in Mrs. Simpson.

"Some gipsy of an actress!" screamed Miss Martha Blount.

"Poor lad, he was so handsome," said Mrs. Drugget.

Mrs. Tom Smith said nothing. Her husband was solicitor to the Delameres.

"All wrong, ladies," said Mr. Toppings; "all wrong to a man, I ought to say to a woman."

"You ought to say to a lady, Mr. Toppings," said Miss Martha.

"I should have said to a lady, I should, Miss Blount," said the corrected bachelor.

"Pooh, pooh! Mr. Toppings," said Mrs. Drugget, "I don't care what you should have said—we married women don't so much care what men say as maiden ladies do."

Miss Martha Blount cast a glance of ire at Mrs. Drugget It was pleasant enough

to have the credit of virtue, but it was cruel to be reminded that she was indebted for the possession of it to what in her heart the spinster deplored as a misfortune.

"Come, Mr. Toppings," said the impatient mistress of the house, "we are losing time. So sit down and let us hear all about it. We can arrange about the baby-clothes afterwards."

"Oh, Mrs. Drugget!" groaned *sotto voce* the virtuous spinster, "to speak of such things before a man."

Miss Blount's modesty failed to attract admiration from the quarter intended, for Mr. Toppings was full of his subject, and had already begun his story.

"You must know, ladies," said the narrator, "that young Mr. Delamere has been living a very gay life in London."

"Natural enough," said the fair hostess. "Youth is youth—why shouldn't he?"

Mr. Toppings took no notice of the interruption, and proceeded,

"My friend writes me that he had become a member of the most fashionable clubs, and from his being a cousin of the Duke of Acton, and a nephew of Lord Lacy's, from his aristocratic connexions, he had got into the very best society."

"And well entitled to it," said Mrs. Tom Smith.

"And then, as he was remarkably handsome, he had all the pretty girls running after him."

"Mr. Toppings," said Miss Martha, in a tone of indignant remonstrance, "if you speak in that shocking fashion, I shall positively leave the room."

"Pooh, pooh!" said Mrs. Drugget, "why should not the pretty girls run after him? They could not be better employed."

"And then it was whispered—" and Mr. Toppings stopped and looked virtuous.

"Out with it, man," said Mrs. Drugget; "it will neither choke you, nor kill us."

"Oh!" screamed Miss Martha, "there is something dreadful coming; I shall die with shame," and the ancient Vestal, with the air of a martyr, covered her face with her hands. In her agitation, it had never occurred to her that she might have gone away.

"On with your story," shouted the married dames in chorus.

"As you wish it, ladies," said the obedient Mr. Toppings, bowing gracefully to the majority, "I will proceed. It was whispered that there were some suppers given by Mr. Delamere and a Mr. Rawlinson to some of the prettiest London actresses."

"I knew it," murmured Miss Martha, "I knew there was a gipsy at the bottom of the mischief."

"You are wrong, Miss Blount. It was

not that that ruined him. But you must understand that Mr. Delamere had formed an intimacy with the same Mr. Rawlinson, who was a partner of one of the great East India houses. The house was in difficulties. They were understood to be temporary, so at least the gentleman persuaded Mr. Delamere, and our young neighbour was induced, upon his representations, to put his name to acceptances to the enormous amount of £40,000. In a week the bubble burst, and the house was found to be irretrievably bankrupt: and, on investigation, it was discovered that for many years the partners had been supporting the establishment at an immense expense, on renewed bills; that their assets are in fact nothing; and that Mr. Delamere was ruined."

"Poor lad!" said Mrs. Tom Smith, and the tears filled the good-natured little woman's eyes.

"Poor lad!" rejoined Mrs. Drugget, "he was so very handsome."

"Just what you might have expected," said Miss Blount. "What could be hoped for of a young man who did not marry when he had the means?"

"And what will be the end of all this, Mr. Toppings?" said the hostess.

"Why, Delamere Court must come into the market, and they say that let it bring what price it may, it will not produce sufficient to discharge the old mortgages, and the new debt.

The information was too astonishing to permit the "Sisters of Charity" to discuss any longer the vestimentary claims of Mrs. Job Johnstone. Mrs. Tom Smith rose hastily, and muttering something about the necessity of seeing her husband, left the room. She was immediately followed by her wedded companions, who each hurried off, eager to be the first to communicate intelli-

gence so interesting to the little community. Miss Blount still lingered in the neighbourhood of the bachelor visitor.

"And, oh! Mr. Toppings," said she, in the admonitory tone in which ancient spinsters are in the habit of addressing single men, "let this be a warning to you. Do you ever seriously reflect? See what a misfortune has happened to poor Mr. Delamere; I trust that you will never be led astray, or induced to put your name hurriedly to any document."

"What! Not to a marriage settlement, Miss Blount?" said Mrs. Drugget. "I suspect that if the document contained the names of Carlton Toppings, bachelor, and Martha Blount, spinster, you would have no objection to see the signature you speak of at the bottom of it."

"Oh, Mrs. Drugget!" said the Vestal. "If you make such gross insinuations, I must leave the room. But I am sure, Mr. Top-

pings, that your pure mind will not be affected by these shocking speeches. Positively, I feel all over I cannot tell how. I should be grateful to any sincere Christian who would lend me their arm, to support me to my own home. Oh, Mrs. Drugget!" And the spinster having directed to her hostess a look of horror, and glanced at her male companion in a fashion which intimated distinctly enough who the sincere Christian was intended to be, tottered in well-affected debility from the apartment.

"Follow her, man! Follow her," whispered Mrs. Drugget to the unsympathizing Toppings. "After so broad a hint, you can't help yourself. But take care that she don't pop the question to you on the road, for she is nearly as desperate as my grand-aunt, who was a Scotchwoman, and who used to declare that 'if she could na get a man, she would marry a muckle laddie.'"

CHAPTER VI.

RUIN.

"Oh, woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please;
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou.'

SCOTT.

THE report of Mr. Toppings' was but too true. The great house of Rawlinson and Co. had become bankrupt; and on the investigation of its affairs, it was discovered that it had for many years been supported by a system of fictitious credit, and that the return of assets was positively a cipher.

Frank Delamere, when the rumour first reached him, confident in the honour of his friend, refused to give it credit; but the truth

gradually developed itself in its fearful outlines, and the heir of the Delameres felt that he was a beggar.

Frank's first thought was of his mother.

"Good God!" said he, as he sat in his solitary chamber on the night of the catastrophe, "have I by my folly deprived her in her old age of all those luxuries which are necessary to her comfort and health? What will she say? What will she think of a son upon whom she has lavished so much care and affection?"

Bitter tears streamed from his eyes, but they brought to him little consolation, and he spent the live-long night upon the bed, without undressing, by turns reflecting bitterly on the past, and endeavouring to sketch out some plan for the future. At length towards day-break exhausted nature sunk to sleep.

With the morning came fresh hope and fresh energy.

"If I have committed a folly," said he

to himself, "I have committed no crime, I am young, I am well educated, and there is time enough to redeem the past. Ah! how well Mary Staunton knew my character, how well she read in my impressionable nature the facility with which I could be led aside from the great objects of life, and the paltriness of my poor ambition. I trust that I shall yet live to prove to her that there is better stuff in me than she dreamed of. But I must write to my poor mother. Yet ere I do so, it were well that I knew the exact extent of my calamity. I must to the city and see my solicitor."

The visit was paid, but it brought with it little consolation. After four-and-twenty hours' investigation by his shrewd and well-informed legal adviser, it was discovered that the forty thousand pounds was irretrievably gone; and that, with the addition of the prior burdens upon Delamere Court, Frank was responsible for a debt, which would not only absorb the whole of the Delamere

estate, but also the fifteen thousand pounds which had been received by his father from the Indian Princes, and which, on the failure of the attempt to purchase Houghton Farm, had been employed in redeeming an old mortgage.

The catastrophe was then certain. Its features and its results were alike distinctly determined. It was a duty no longer to conceal it from Mrs. Delamere, and Frank sat down to write to his mother.

The letter was long, and penned with a heavy heart. But it was honest. He concealed no part of his folly, or its fearful consequences. Frank sealed it, addressed it, and posted it with his own hand. He then returned to his rooms, and for two days, in the silence of despair, awaited the answer. It came at last, and was such as might have been expected from Mrs. Delamere. It was as follows:

"Delamere Court.

"My dear boy,

"I have received your sad letter. It is

a heavy dispensation; but you must bear it like a man. Come to me, and at once, my dear Frank, and do not vex yourself about me, or my prospects. I was brought up with economy, and my paternal inheritance, small as it is, is sufficient for my wants. Come then, I repeat, and at once, to Delamere Court. Where will you find a more disinterested counsellor than

"Your affectionate mother,

"Sophy Delamere."

The advice was too much in accordance with Frank's feelings not to be immediately acted upon. By that night's mail he returned to Delamere.

The meeting was a painful one; but the pain was occasioned by Frank's feelings, for there was no reproach on the part of his mother. On the contrary, the kind-hearted and excellent woman did everything in her power to relieve his despondency. And she succeeded. In a few days his mind became

less agitated, and he was able to discuss in a comparatively calm tone the catastrophe and its causes.

"And yet, mother," continued he, as one evening they sat together in the drawing-room, talking over the past, "you seem to be less overwhelmed by all this than myself. How is it so?"

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Delamere, with a faint smile, "because I partly expected it."

"Oh, mother!"

"Yes, my dear boy, you are a true son of your father. He, like you, could never be taught to suspect."

"And why, if you knew my weakness, did you not counsel me against it?"

"Simply, Frank, because I lay it down as a rule never to give advice."

"And yet advice is considered the greatest boon which the old can bestow upon the young."

"If it is a gift, it is a fatal one."

"Mother!"

"Yes, Frank, I speak advisedly. A man to succeed in the world must succeed by his own qualities, and not by those of others, and mental and physical qualities alike cease to be his own, if they depend upon another's counsels. Every human being, for the most part, excels in that which he does often, and the man who depends solely, upon all occasions, on his own powers of judgment, will, taught by his own errors and their experience, eventually judge well. If, on the contrary, he ever depends upon the counsels of his friends, he can have no stable rule of action, because it is probable that no two friends would agree as to what that action should be."

"Your argument would be just, mother, if he were to abandon himself indiscriminately to the opinions of any who came across his path. But if he had the sense to distinguish the wise from the foolish, the experienced from those without experience, would he not save himself, warned by the

knowledge gained by their career, from the pitfalls likely to engulph him in his own."

"No. Success in life does not depend solely upon an acquaintance with wise adages. It depends fully as much upon the power of carrying them into practice. If a South Sea Islander, who, as Captain Cook tells us, is as much at home in the water as the land, were to prove to you that to save your life it was necessary to swim a river three miles wide, the advice would be excellent, but it would be useless. Why?"

"Because, to enable me to avail myself of it, it would be necessary for the Otaheitan or the New Zealander to bestow on me, along with the counsel, those habits of natation which he possesses himself."

"True. And it is in the moral as it is in the physical world. A counsellor does no good service to him on whom he bestows his counsels, unless along with the advice, he bestow also the mental and physical energies—the thousand minute experiences

—the perseverance—the determination which in his own case would make successful the adoption of the plan which he recommended."

Frank sighed.

"You may be right, mother; but in my own case, I have paid a fearful price for my knowledge."

"It is, my dear boy, a fearful price; but high as it is, it is not too great, if it teach you for the rest of your life to trust as little to a man who is ever prating of his honour and his character, as to a woman who boasts of her modesty. But let us not be ever reverting to the past. It was weak to commit the folly. It would be a still greater weakness to be perpetually dwelling on it, or allowing it to paralyse your future energies. You have gained experience—that is knowledge. You must endeavour to carry the experience into practice—that will be wisdom."

There was a pause for some minutes.

"And what, my dear boy," said Mrs.

Delamere, "does your solicitor say. Does he hold out any hopes?"

"None whatever. The firm will not pay a sixpence, and all must go. The old Hall, books, lands, everything; all that the proud Delameres have for centuries contemplated as objects of affection or reverence."

There was again a pause.

"If it must be, it must, Frank, but every picture has its light as well as shade. We ought to be grateful to Providence that we are not left utterly destitute. You know that I inherit some hundred and fifty pounds a-year in ground rents, and a house at Manchester. Fortunately, your poor father insisted upon settling them upon me at the time of our marriage. So they are beyond the reach of your creditors; and though the house and income are a humble one, they will at least give us a home, and the means of present support. Nay, don't shed tears, boy, or you will make your mother also faint-hearted. You are young, you have

great talents and high character; and if God only gives you health, and an average share of life, I doubt not that the day will come when you will be able to say, that 'sweet are the uses of adversity.' Be assured that in this world everything is for the best."

"Such a dispensation as this, mother, would almost make one doubt the truth of such a text."

"Such a dispensation as this, Frank, is precisely that which is required to prove the purity of our faith. If we believe not in misfortune that the text is true, that faith becomes not a reality but a profession. But to bed, my dear boy. Hope will come again and with to-morrow."

And the mother and son separated.

On the following day, Tom Smith was summoned to Delamere Court. The worthy attorney, who had a high respect for Mrs. Delamere, and a warm affection for her son, heard, and with unaffected sorrow, the tale of ruin which was to sweep away from

their place, a family which for eight centuries had been its honoured residents. To attempt to offer consolation for a calamity so overwhelming would have been idle, and the kind-hearted solicitor listened in silent sympathy. There was nothing for him to advise, and his advice was not asked; the mother and son had already decided on their plans. It was arranged that they should at once curtail their expenditure by dismissing their establishment, and that Tom Smith should be put in possession of the old Hall and its contents, for the benefit of the creditors; while, to spare to Mrs. Delamere and her son the pain likely to be inflicted upon both, by being present while the myrmidons of the law made catalogues of the various portions of the property that was so soon to pass into other hands, it was proposed that they should retire to the small dwelling which belonged to her at Manchester as a paternal inheritance. It had been let furnished.

Fortunately the tenant had died some three months before. It had not been re-let, and was now vacant. It was agreed, therefore, on the next day but one, Mrs. Delamere and her son should proceed to Manchester, and should leave the solicitor to pay off the household, and make the necessary arrangements.

The determination was carried out. The following day was devoted to packing their personal wardrobe, and in the evening, Frank without the knowledge of his mother, climbed to the top of the hill behind the mansion, and from its summit cast a last look on the inheritance of his race. The sun approached the setting, and as its sinking ray illumined spire and river, forest and fell, they had perhaps never looked so beautiful.

"Lost," said he, "all lost, and through a scoundrel. Yet not so, the fault was not his, but mine. I trusted a man against whom I had been warned, and who, except his

plausible professions, had done nothing to deserve my trust. If it were a folly, it has been heavily atoned for. But God's will be done !"

On the following morning at ten o'clock, a post-chaise was at the door, and the mother and son unattended, proceeded to their new home.

CHAPTER VII.

FRESH EMBARRASSMENTS.

"Pity the sorrows of a poor old man."

ENGLISH BALLAD.

Laurel Cottage had been the residence of Mrs. Delamere's father. It was built after the true cockney fashion. In the centre, and on a level with the ground, was the front door opening into a passage some four feet wide, on either side of which were the dining-room and drawing-room. Both were small, and the latter by its limited dimensions had been found so inconvenient, that Mr. Weston had added a new sitting-room of considerable size, and projecting into the garden. The end of the passage was occupied by a wooden staircase which led to the first floor. In

this were three bed-rooms, while above and lighted by windows in the roof, were two minute attics which formed the dormitories of the servants.

The villa, to use a modern phrase, stood about ten feet back from the public road, from which it was separated by a stone and lime fence, some three feet high, topped with an iron railing. The space between the house and the wall was taken up, in its full extent, by two immense flower-beds, one on each side the narrow gravel walk, which led to the main door; the centre of either being ornamented by shell and rock-work,—the manner in which the citizen endeavours to imitate the rococo taste of his superiors. Behind was a garden some acre in extent, plentifully stocked with apple-trees and gooseberry bushes.

The place was small but cheerful. The windows, alike of sitting-rooms and bed-rooms looked to the south, while the woodbines and jessamine, which nearly covered the front of

the building, and the honeysuckles which twined themselves gracefully along the wall and railings, softened to the eye the harsh outlines, and gave to the spot that air of cleanly and quiet domesticity, which is so especially the characteristic of the residences of England's middle classes.

The sun was shining brightly when Mrs. Delamere, on the morning after their arrival, descended to the breakfast-room. Frank had preceded her. He was sitting at the table with his head resting upon his hands, and so wrapped in his own meditations, that he was unconscious of her approach.

"Come, my dear Frank," said his mother gaily, "why don't you welcome me to my château; why don't you pay me compliments on the beauty of my honeysuckles and my woodbines? Why don't you admire my rock work, and that cast iron Hercules with his club in the corner?"

"Ah," said her son, "how can you continue to affect a gaiety which I am sure you cannot

feel. These rooms are so small, that one can hardly breathe in them, and this miserable furniture! Oh, mother! I shall never forgive myself for having by my folly condemned your old age to such a residence."

"My dear Frank, to reproach yourself for such a reason would be idle, for to this residence I must have one day come, even if you had not lost Delamere. You would have married, Frank. Every young man ought to marry, and a wife and a mother-in-law never agree. So I must have come here some day or other; and what, I should like to know, have you to find fault with. The house is comfortable enough, and many a time have I been out with your father in his campaigns, during the rainy season, when I would have given worlds to have had half as good quarters. So again I ask," said she with a laugh, which did its best to appear gay, "what have you, most critical sir, to find fault with?"

"Oh, mother! It is not merely the house or the size of the rooms. Look at their dis-

comfort? Look at the furniture? Ten hair bottom chairs, so high that one can scarce sit on them, and that oval-shaped, four legged table, on the other hand so infamously low that I raise it with my knees whenever I approach it, and that wretched Kidderminster carpet."

"Pooh, pooh, boy! one only uses a dining-room to eat one's meals in. We shall sit in the drawing-room, and its dimensions are larger; as to its furniture, I consider that positively handsome."

"My dear mother, how can you say so. Except that the chairs are covered with staring red moreen, instead of hair-cloth, and that the room possesses two straight backed uncomfortable sofas, it is as bad as this."

"What would you wish more?"

"Why, how can you seriously ask? There is not an arm-chair, not a lounging-chair, nothing upon which one can comfortably sit down; and then the walls—not a book,

not a picture, not a print—all bare, the emblem of desolation."

"My dear Frank, I beg you will not paint my drawing-room in such odious colours. You forget the cut-glass girandoles on the chimney-piece, and the large map of Europe worked in worsted by my grandmother. To be sure, our worthy ancestress has left out France, and has somewhat unduly expanded Holland and the Low Countries; but I doubt not, in her time, the blunder was never discovered; and then the mirror between the windows. To be sure, it is only two feet long and one wide, but with its whirligig frame and its gilt candlesticks, it forms a very handsome piece of furniture. And so, notwithstanding the critical disposition of Mr. Francis Delamere, I will uphold my drawing-room as a very nice one."

"Ah, my dear mother," said her son, "your kind heart makes you say all this; but I know that these things must render

you perfectly wretched. I shall never forgive myself."

"My dear boy," said his mother, gravely, "all this is folly, and worse than folly. Happiness does not depend upon having a piece of furniture more or less, and if Sophy Delamere should become wretched, it would not be for want of pictures on her walls, or easy-chairs in her drawing-room. It will be from want of self-control on the part of her son, and his not employing to the best purposes the energies which God has given him."

"Ah, so said Mary Staunton; her very words. What will she say—what will she think when she hears of this catastrophe."

And Frank buried his face in his hands, and leaning his head on the table, wept.

His mother looked at him for some time in silence, and with tears in her eyes.

"Come, my boy," said she at length, as she laid her hand on his shoulder, "this despair is natural, but it is unmanly; and though you have committed an error, you have

ample time to redeem it. You are young; you have birth, education, and powerful connexions, and there are thousands who have begun the world with inferior advantages, who have distinguished themselves in it. Why should not you?"

"But how am I to begin?"

"That is a matter to be thought of afterwards. Plans to be discussed well must be discussed calmly, and till Delamere be sold, you will be in a high fever; and from the distraction alike of mind and body will be unable either to know your own position, or to give to your future profession that undivided energy which would be necessary to its success. For some months then, my child, I must insist on your remaining here. My income, thank God, with close economy will be sufficient to support us for the present; and when the stupor produced by this great calamity has passed away, it will be time enough to think of what is to be your occupation in after-life."

Frank suffered himself to be persuaded, and the two sat down to their morning meal. When it was over, Mrs. Delamere began to make the arrangements necessary for their new abode.

The management of the interior, she of course reserved for herself, and to assist in the duties connected with it, engaged the services of a maid-of-all-work, with cheeks like peonies, and a redundancy of outline that rivalled a Flemish peasant's.

As for Frank, he undertook the garden. The task had in fact been suggested by Mrs. Delamere. She was anxious to wean him from painful recollections, and she knew well that labour is the best panacea for sorrow. The grounds, as we have already mentioned, were of some extent, but they had been sadly neglected, and Frank's spade soon made important improvements. He worked from breakfast till dinner-time. In the morning, he trenched and delved, while the latter part of the day was more agreeably

appropriated to planting rose-bushes and sowing flower-seeds. Occasionally exhausted by the unwonted fatigue, the young horticulturist would pause in his labours, and his mind would wander to the past, to Delamere Court, and Mary Staunton. But this cessation was never long lived. The recollection of his mother's wishes, and the desire to prove to her that he could exhibit self-denial in the prosecution of an ungrateful occupation, stimulated him to renewed exertions. With the thought he would shake off the apathy and the regrets of the moment, and like Gelimer, king of the Vandals, in Marmontel's story, resumed his spade.

About a week had elapsed after this fashion. Frank had become gradually more calm, and his fond parent, who, without his consciousness, watched every movement and expression of his open and tell-tale countenance, saw with pleasure that the colour was once more returning to his cheek, and that he began to

remark with interest or amusement the changes which her taste and industry were producing in the interior of their humble mansion, and a fortunate discovery enabled her to exhibit her department to advantage.

It will be remembered that in Laurel Cottage there were two attics. One of these was the bed-room of the rosy-cheeked kitchen-maid, the other had its door nailed up, and for further security was fastened by a padlock, connected with the portal by a hasp and staple, bolted into the wood-work, and as was afterwards learned, fastened with nuts in the inside. The sight of the precautions brought into Sophy's mind an indistinct recollection that when, on her departure for India, it had been resolved to let the house furnished on a long lease, certain articles which were supposed to be too valuable or fragile to be trusted to the tenant, had been deposited within.

What they were Mrs. Delamere could not remember, but the contents of the interior,

when by the assistance of a neighbouring blacksmith, they had gained it, called up as agreeable sensations as the discovery by Scipio of the chambers in the fourth tower of Gil Blas's château at Lirias. A maiden aunt of Mr. Weston's had been godmother to Mrs. Delamere, and Sophy, who was named after her, had been the inheritrix of the choicest portion of her property. In his marriage settlement, General Delamere, who was then deeply embarrassed, and who was anxious to protect the independance and future comfort of his bride, had taken care that her little estate, heritable and moveable, principal and interest, should be secured to her own use, and not affectable by his creditors. Thus the contents of the carefully protected attic at Laurel Cottage, like its furniture, and the rest of Sophy's paternal inheritance, had never belonged to her husband, and were not absorbed in the ruin of his son. It was, therefore, with very gratified eyes that Mrs. Delamere and Frank

surveyed what, in the present state of their fortunes, they looked upon as positive treasures. The bequest of the old lady was covered with a thick coating of dust, and consisted of two curious French cabinets of great beauty, and eight large and heavy wooden chests. Four of these were filled with books, containing some of the best engravings, and ornamental works from the types of Boydell. Two were crammed with Dresden porcelain, while the seventh was occupied by rolls of China paper of different patterns, one of which was intended for the walls of a large, and the other of a small room. In the eighth was a set of old-fashioned, but still handsome chintz window-curtains and chair-covers.

When people have suffered from misfortunes which might appear overwhelming, it is astonishing what trifles serve to cheer them. The whole contents of the attic, at an auction, might possibly not have fetched a hundred pounds; but ten times the sum could

scarcely have produced a more exhilarating influence on Mrs. Delamere and her son.

In a few days, the drawing-room, whose deserted appearance had shocked Frank, changed its character. By the aid of the China paper, trees blossomed, and birds sung upon its walls. The chintz, pared down to proper dimensions by the industry of Mrs. Delamere, clothed chairs and sofas, and windows. The French marqueterie blazed forth jauntily below, the books filled the shelves and covered the tables, while the old spinster's china flaunted on the tops of the cabinets, or made gay the long ugly masses of mahogany, which, under the name of furniture, had hitherto disfigured the room. When to all this, the mistress of the mansion had added muslin curtains, the creation of her nimble fingers, flower-pots, with roses and mignionette, and some two or three baskets of green-and-white Worcestershire ware, filled with flowers, it would be difficult to imagine a more cheerful apartment.

Her son viewed the transmutation with surprise.

"My dear mother," said he, as he one afternoon returned from his labour among the gooseberry bushes and apple-trees, and was introduced into the saloon in its new glory, "my dear mother, I shall begin to consider you a positive fairy. Who could have supposed that such a wretched looking place could have undergone such a change. Why, your drawing-room looks beautiful—I shall have such a faith in your prophecies as to fancy that your gay visions for the future have in them something of reality.

"Frank," said Mrs. Delamere, "you may always believe in a prophecy, when there is a determination to accomplish it. Time and I against the world, said some wise man, and Time and I against the world, says Sophy Delamere, whom you very properly and judiciously, and like a discerning son, think a wise woman. I have made my poor drawing-room into a handsome one. You shall see,"

said she, nodding gaily, "I shall make my poor boy into a rich and distinguished man."

"Well, mother, God grant it may be so," said he, with a deep sigh, "and I hope it will be so. Not that for myself, I can again care for wealth or distinction, but that I may prove to you that I am not wholly undeserving your affection."

"I have no fears, Frank," said his parent, looking at him with glistening eyes; "and my confidence is the greater, that I trust fortune has done its worst. I see no chance of fresh embarrassments."

Mrs. Delamere was wrong.

It was about a fortnight after they had removed to their new dwelling, and when calm was returning to the bosoms of both, that as they were seated at the breakfast table, the postman's double rap was heard at the door.

"A letter, no doubt," said Frank, "from Mr. Smith about the sale of Delamere. But no," said he, as the slipshod factotum

placed the missive in his hands, "this is not Smith's handwriting. And what a strangely folded letter, and sealed, too, with a thimble, as if it came from a washer-woman. How very odd. Do you know the hand?"

The epistle was passed to Mrs. Delamere, but it was only to enable her to echo her son's ignorance.

"And a foolscap sheet, too," said she. "It is very extraordinary. I am dying with curiosity. Do, Frank, make haste and open it, and let us hear what it says."

The son obeyed, and with a face which expressed unutterable astonishment, read as follows:

No. 15, Minories, Aldgate, London.

"My dear nephew,

"You probably little thought that you were soon to have the pleasure of seeing your affectionate uncle, John Delamere. You may possibly have heard that seven and

twenty years ago, I was obliged, in consequence of not being able to live on the very limited allowance which that old miser your grandfather chose to make me, to leave England. I went to Naples, and as one of those foreign fellows chanced to be impertinent, I was under the disagreeable necessity, from a regard to my own honour, of shooting him. I don't know how it was, but his family did not look at it in the proper point of view, and spoke of hanging me. So I had nothing for it, but to make off in a Turkish brigantine, which sailed the same afternoon, on which I had settled accounts with the Neapolitan chap. But I was ever born to be unlucky. We were taken by an Algerine free-trader, and I was sold to a Bey in Egypt. He chose to be jealous of me. You know it has always been the misfortune of the Delameres to be irresistible with the women; his sultana had the good taste to like my face better than his black and tan muzzle, and the mean nigger thought fit to transfer

me to the agent of the Pasha of Bassora, who wanted an interpreter with the honourable John Company, as they call the Tea-caddy folks. My new mission took me to Bombay. But I preferred trading on my own account, so I left the Turk, and joined a Mahratta chief, who had come down from the high country to buy gunpowder. They are fine fellows, these Mahrattas, but they are not liberal. I was with them for twenty years, lost my left arm in their service, got more kicks than halfpence, and, finding that I was getting old, and that I was still as poor as Job after he had lost his sheep, I thought the best thing I could do was to come home, and spend my last days at Delamere. It was a disagreeable shock to me to find that the old Hall was gone, but, as I dare say you have something left, and as I have nothing, I have no doubt you will be glad to have an opportunity of making so near a relative comfortable. So be so good as let me know when my room is ready, and

I will put my traps on the top of the stage, and be down to you. I hear your mother is still living, and that she is a bustling, good-humoured old soul. Give my kind regards to her, and believe me, my dear Frank,

"Your affectionate uncle,

"JOHN DELAMERE."

Frank put the letter on the table, and each looked at the other in consternation. Silence was broken by Frank.

"And what," said he, "is to be done now?"

Mrs. Delamere shook her head.

"Why, I can hardly fancy this scrawl can be written by my uncle. Captain Delamere was, at least, a gentleman."

"Very true, Frank," said his mother. "The letter is not such as one might expect from an officer in the Guards; but I can, by what I have seen myself, guess well enough how seven-and-twenty years of rough com-

panionship can change a man's feelings and language."

"You think, then, that it may be from my uncle John?"

"Possible enough."

"And would you, upon such slender evidence, permit the assumption of the relationship."

"Certainly not. If he is Captain Delamere, there are no doubt people still living who must remember him well, and be able to identify him."

"And if he succeeded in establishing such identity, what would you do?"

The question seemed embarrassing, and there was again silence. It lasted for some minutes.

At length Frank said: "This is a matter which I must decide. You have barely sufficient for your own comfortable support, and it is only to gratify you that, for the next three months, while I select a profession, I encumber you with the expense

of my maintenance. I cannot permit that your income, already too small, should be trenched on for the benefit of one who, to you at least, whatever he may be to me, is even by relationship a stranger."

There was once more a long silence. It was this time broken by Mrs. Delamere.

"Our means, my dear boy, are, heaven knows, slender enough; and it is a severe trial to be obliged to tax them with a further burden. But it is a good rule in life to do what one ought to do without looking to consequences. It is astonishing how much it simplifies one's course of action. If the writer of this letter be really your uncle, and the brother of my husband, he is entitled to our aid. It would be well, indeed, if his sister, Lady Lacy, who is so much better able than ourselves to afford it, were to undertake the charge of supporting him; but if she refuses, I see nothing for it but to give him a share of what we possess. It is little indeed, beyond mere food and shelter, and it will

require pinching economy to enable us to bestow even that; but while we have it, God forbid we should not bestow it."

Frank would have combated his mother's generous resolution, but in vain. When principle was at stake, Mrs. Delamere was immovable, and in accordance with her wishes her son addressed a letter to his new correspondent.

He stated that though he did not deny the relationship, he must have positive proof of the claims which the writer put forth. He added a short account of his own misfortunes —of his present means of support—of the limited income of his mother—and he suggested that if Captain Delamere were the person he represented himself to be, it would be not only agreeable, but more convenient to Mrs. Delamere and himself that he should apply to his sister, Lady Lacy, for assistance. He added that he doubted not she would afford it; but that if it should be refused, his mother and himself would be glad to give

him a home and a share in the humble fare to which they themselves were now reduced.

The letter was carefully read over, corrected, copied, and Frank posted it himself. During four most tedious days they waited with intense anxiety for a reply. They waited in vain. At last on the fifth came the postman's double rap, and a large packet was placed on the table. It was opened with nervous impatience. It contained four letters. Three were addressed to Captain Delamere. One was from Lady Lacy refusing all aid, and denouncing her unhappy brother as a vagabond. The other two were from the family banker, and the Provost of Eton, who had been John Delamere's tutor in his boyhood, both bearing, in the strongest language, testimony that the stranger just returned from foreign parts was John Delamere, formerly captain in the Guards, and son of the late Francis Delamere of Delamere Court. Frank was an Etonian, and was well acquainted with the hand-writing of the Provost, and

equally so with that of the head of the London firm which for a century had been the bankers of his family. That John Delamere was his uncle was evident enough. The fourth letter was from John Delamere himself.

It stated in his off-hand fashion, that he enclosed the required evidence of his identity, with a letter from his sister shewing that she would do nothing for him, and in laconic terms expressed a wish to learn if his nephew were willing to receive him.

There was nothing left for it then. Poor as they were, they were about to have a guest even more impoverished than themselves.

Frank wrote a long and kind letter to his uncle. He said, that satisfied as he now was of the relationship, he would do his best to discharge to him its duties; mentioned that a room would be immediately prepared for him, fixed an early day for his arrival, stated the hour and place at which the coach for Manchester left London, together with the intimation that he would be awaiting him.

To all this, Mrs. Delamere, ever kind and thoughtful, added in a postscript, that she would do her best to make her house agreeable to the brother of her deceased husband.

By return of post came a letter accepting the invitation, and at the day and hour fixed, Frank proceeded to the coach office to receive his new relative.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNCLE JOHN.

"For I haven't a 'janius' for work,
It was never a gift of the Bradies;
But I'd make a most 'illigant' Turk,
For I'm fond of tobacco and ladies."
LEVER'S "CHARLES O'MALLEY."

THE coach was not more than an hour behind the time appointed for its arrival, a fact which however much it might have been criticised twenty years afterwards, was in 1802 considered a meritorious approach to punctuality. Such at least was the opinion of the proprietor of the vehicle himself, who seated in the snug parlour behind the bar of the inn, awaited its advent with a complacency undisturbed by competition, or

the more rapid travelling of the then unknown heresy of fast coaches.

Poor Frank did not regard the sluggish movements of the Tally-ho with the same indifference. Anxious to gratify his uncle's feelings by being on the spot to receive him, he had punctually taken up his station in the neighbourhood of the office, some few minutes before the time at which the coach should have made its appearance, and unwilling in his present poverty to expend even sixpence in purchasing shelter, by ordering a glass of ale from the bar, he had spent an hour of a cold and sleety night in February in pacing up and down, backwards and forwards, pondering on his future fortunes, and taking a view of them, which naturally melancholy enough under the circumstances, probably borrowed something of its gloomy character from the physical discomfort and depression of the moment.

At length a dull, heavy rumble was heard in the distance, varied by the utterance

of the three hiccuping notes, and the drawl that followed them, which the guards of our stage coaches dignified by the appellation of blowing the horn. From its unanimous adoption by the fraternity of the protectors of our public vehicles, the sound must have been considered peculiarly impressive, but by any other than an Englishman its fearful discordancy would have been received as sufficient evidence that the lips which delighted to produce, or the ears which listened to it, without pain or indignation, must have belonged to the most unmusical people in Europe.

In the meanwhile the intimation of approaching wheels grew more and more distinct, and the sharp toot toot too, which rose above it, though as jarring as ever had its monotony occasionally varied, as if the Orpheus of the tin tube was endeavouring to celebrate his arrival by attempting to play a tune. At the welcome signal, helpers rushed out from the stables—and revellers

from the tap room. "Mine host of the Garter" himself appeared at the door, flanked by a waiter on either side in a full suit of black, with the appropriate white neck-tie, and the equally essential white napkin which each flourished by a spasmodic movement of his right hand. In the back ground was the ample hostess in silk gown and cap glorious with red ribbons, while around her flitted two or three chambermaids; hurrying to and fro, apparently without any settled purpose, and having somewhat the appearance of Bacchantes in a Ballet at the Opera.

In a minute after, the coach turned into the yard. The waiters rushed to open the door to give the means of exit to the six "genteel" passengers within. The outsides as being of less dignity, had their comfort attended to by the ostler placing a ladder against the roof.

Frank drew up along with many others at the door-way, and anxiously watched their disembarkation. The six inside were

females. It was evident that Uncle John was not there. In the twelve outers there was such a resemblance, covered as they all were by cloaks and great coats, that it was difficult even to guess how far his relative had arrived or not. He was not, however, long left in doubt. A clear, distinct voice exclaimed in tones which had evidently been accustomed to exercise authority:

"I say, Mr. Landlord, can you tell me if there is any one here from Mrs. Delamere's, of—?" the voice here muttered to itself. "I always forget the name of that d—d place. Aye, of Laurel Cottage?"

The landlord answered in the negative, but Frank at once supplied the wanting information, and going up to the speaker without circumlocution, introduced himself to him as his nephew.

"Ha!" said the new comer, as he laid hold of his hand with a grasp which had something of the power of the grip of a smith's vice, "let's see you?"

With the words he dragged his young relative in the most unceremonious fashion, within the glare of the hall lamps, and perfectly indifferent to his stopping up the passage, and discomposing half of his fellow passengers, he looked at Frank with a long and keen gaze.

"My nephew, sure enough," growled forth he at length. "By Jove, he is as like Gerald as two peas."

Having apparently satisfied himself with his scrutiny, he dropped Frank's hand, and having left it to recover at its leisure its suspended circulation, expressed his anxiety to get down what he termed his traps.

Frank had come to the conclusion, that the effects of so poor a man would probably be contained in an old pocket-handkerchief, and it was therefore with considerable surprise that he saw taken from the roof, two of those large black trunks abundantly bound with brass at the corners, which were then the invariable portion of the outfit for the

Anglo-Indian vassals of Leadenhall Street. Their weight too, seemed to correspond with their bulk, for the porter who from above started them singly on their downward voyage, had evidently undertaken a task of some difficulty, and the two officials who received them below groaned as Atlas might have done, when he had the world first put upon his shoulders.

It is possible that Frank's astonishment at the bulk of the baggage of his new relative expressed itself in his countenance, for Uncle John thought fit to chuckle forth in his ear.

"Ha! ha! admire my traps, I see—yes—old soldier—saved my baggage train in the retreat—shan't want to call on you to fork out to buy Nunky new shirts—lots enough in the box for a member of Council. But I say let's be off, lad; four-and-twenty hours in the rain, on the top of that confounded tub are as bad as a bivouac in the Ghauts in the rainy season."

Thus exhorted, Frank turned his steps homewards, accompanied by his uncle, and followed by two trucks, each bearing one of the brass-bound repertories of his relative's wardrobe.

Half an hour's walk brought them to their home. Mrs. Delamere was waiting in the lobby to receive them. The new comer kissed her affectionately on both cheeks, and having received the baggage, dismissed the porters, and throwing off his upper garments, entered the drawing-room. The night had been too dark, and the little lobby too narrow and ill-lighted to have permitted the parties to judge of the appearance of the other. But in the blaze of the sitting-room—for in especial honour of the occasion, and as the play bills have it, for "this night only," a second lamp had been lighted—person and features were distinctly discernible, and for two minutes the relatives, now met for the first time, regarded each other with eager looks.

The new comer was a man about six feet high, and of a spare make; but the want of flesh argued no want of power, for his motions were easy, and his step firm. The forehead was high, and somewhat bare about the temples, the nose Roman, the lips thin, with the satirical expression not uncommonly possessed by lips of that character; at least so far as could be judged, for they were nearly lost in a mass of white hair, which under the double denomination of moustache and beard, covered the lower part of his face. The eyebrow was large, heavy and frowning; the eye below, light-grey, keen, and almost fierce in its glance. Everything marked the man of unhesitating courage, and one who had evidently been accustomed neither to contradiction nor control. He wore a double-breasted blue surtout with gilt buttons, and high collar, short waist, and skirts which reached to the calf of his leg. A waistcoat of shabby crimson velvet, which apparently had once

been trimmed with gold-lace, blue pantaloons, fitting tight to the leg, together with Hessian boots, which came as high as the top of the calf behind, and in front rose nearly to the knees, and were furthermore ornamented by a tarnished gold tassel, completed the costume.

All this, which has taken us some time to describe, was of course gathered at a glance by Mrs. Delamere and her son. But they learned something more than a mere catalogue of Captain Delamere's dress or his features. They were satisfied that he was the real Simon Pure, the relative he represented himself to be, for Frank was at once struck with the traveller's resemblance to his grandfather, while Mrs. Delamere, by his face and figure, the intonations of his voice, the abruptness of his articulation, and a thousand minutiæ of manner which so mysteriously attach themselves to members of one family, was so reminded of her deceased husband, that she burst into tears.

The sight seemed to soften Captain Delamere's rude nature, for muttering to himself:

"Ah, poor thing! I understand. I was always considered very like Gerald." And affecting to hum a tune, he turned his back on her, and proceeded to study with apparently great interest, the cabinets and the china of that virtuous and deceased spinster, Miss Sophia Weston.

Mrs. Delamere took advantage of his real or pretended forgetfulness of her presence, and muttering something about supper, left the room.

The evening meal was shortly after announced by Betsy, the solitary maid-of-all-work, as being ready in the dining-room. When it was concluded, the Captain's boxes were, with some difficulty, transported up the narrow staircase to his apartment, and the good folks at Laurel Cottage retired to rest.

On the following morning, after break-

fast, the party adjourned to the drawing-room, and Captain Delamere, who had changed the close vestments of the preceding evening for an old-fashioned, loose dressing-gown of faded yellow Persian silk, a pair of crimson trowsers, each leg of which was about three feet in diameter, and which were fastened at the waist and either ankle by a cord, Indian papooshes of velvet, and a gaily-coloured turban, proceeded to make himself, what he called comfortable. He brought down stairs from one of the Noah's arks above an immense hookah, and proceeded gravely to light it, to the horror of Frank, and the annoyance of Mrs. Delamere.

This done, he sought about for a convenient resting place; but the finding it was no easy matter. From long habit he detested sitting on a chair, and the sofas which had been the objects of Frank's objurgatory criticism, were neither broad enough nor soft enough to offer him the means of squatting with advantage. He evidently,

however, was a person not easily discomposed, and after half a dozen well articulated oaths, and having cursed himself for a fool, for having left the comforts of eastern life, he mounted to his own room, and returned with a Persian carpet, about four feet square. This he gravely spread upon the most comfortable part of the drawing-room floor, seated himself on it, à la Turk, with his legs under him, and having relighted his hookah, and expressed an astonishment that Frank did not keep a hookahbadhar, proceeded to puff away with an energy that threatened soon to fill the room with tobacco smoke.

Frank could stand it no longer.

"My dear uncle," said he, "you forget, smoking in a drawing-room is not customary in England, and I assure you, my mother, though she is too polite to say so, does not like it."

"Pooh! pooh! boy," was the indignant reply, "you know nothing about the matter.

Madam Delamere does like it. Your father Gerald used to smoke like a volcano. I am sure she never spent a day in India without seeing his pipe lighted at least a dozen times, and if she did not find fault with it in him, why should she find fault with it in me."

Mrs. Delamere said nothing, but Frank still muttered something about his tobacco being unplesant.

The observation only elicited a fresh growl.

"Now, that remark boy, shows your ignorance. This is Latakia—pure Latakia, —better was never smoked by the sultan. I met a chap in London whom I had once done a kindness to when I was at Bassorah. He was then but a water-carrier, and little worse off than myself, and now faith, I find him here Ambassador of the Ottoman Porte. The rascal remembered the past and was grateful. He made me a present of twenty pounds of it. No, no, my good fellow, from your want of education you are necessarily ignorant, but you will learn better as you get

older, and I doubt not that you and Madam Delamere will soon get passionately fond of it. As for myself, I dare say I shall in time be comfortable enough, and when I get down my two monkeys, my cockatoo, and that dear little pet, my rattlesnake; I shall do my best to accustom myself to this dull life of yours, for you must confess Frank that the house is devilish dull."

"Your monkeys and your cockatoo," said Frank, in astonishment.

"Your rattlesnake, my dear sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Delamere, in horror.

"Yes, my monkeys and my rattlesnake, what is there to be astonished at," replied the gentleman on the carpet, taking the amber mouth-piece from his lips, and surveying both mother and son with a look of the most perfect philosophy. "Every man has his hobbies, and mine is natural history. By Jove! when I was in the service of Jung Jow Cheribow, I had a perfect menagerie. There was a jewel of a boa constrictor, that ate a

goat for breakfast once a fortnight. I had him sent down to the ship, but he misbehaved himself the day after he came on board. They had forgotten to send off a supply of goats, and as the poor fellow felt hungry, he made a grab at the cabin boy. So some silly women, with children in the cuddy, took a foolish prejudice against him, and insisted on his being thrown overboard. By Jove, I thought I should never have got over it. I am not sentimental, Frank. I don't pretend to fine feelings, and one day when Jung Jow walked into the Pindarrees, I cut down five as fine fellows as ever put foot in stirrup, and never felt a qualm about it. But the look which that poor dear martyred brute of a snake gave me before he ducked his head under the water would have melted the heart of a Stoic. I have never got over it I tell you."

"And so the boa was drowned, and there the matter ended."

"No sir, the matter did not end there. I

was nearly black in the face with rage, and if I had had the skipper fellow in Jung Jow's country, I should certainly have taken his head off with as little compunction as I would bite the end off a radish. But I had got into your confounded civilised latitudes, and so I had nothing for it, but to threaten him with an action. What do you think the insolent scoundrel did?"

"Upon my word uncle I cannot guess."

"He laughed in my face. But as soon as I got to London, I set a clever chap of an attorney to work, and faith, when master 'Tacks and Sheets' found the matter was getting serious, he changed his tune. He made me a thousand apologies. I would not listen to them. He threatened me with the evidence of all the Jezabels, the owners of the squalling mulligatawny faced whelps in the cuddy. I did not value them a rush. At last he found out my weak side, and bribed me."

"Bribed you."

"Yes—you must know, that two days

before, a brother blue jacket of his had come in from Trinidad, and brought with him a positive jewel. My man offered to get it for me if I would withdraw my action, and say no more about the boa. So I took a peep at it. By Jove, Frank, I gave in at once. I could not resist it."

"Was it of value?"

"Immense."

"But did you trust entirely to your own judgment?"

"Of course, I did. Do you think I was going to run the risk of losing such a chance. And lucky it was so, for Polito positively cried when he found he had lost it."

"Polito!"

"Yes, Polito, the menagerie man. If he is not a good judge of rattlesnakes, I don't know who is, and he said this one was the biggest he ever looked at."

"And so this jewel was another snake."

"Of course," said uncle John, with eyes that expressed the utmost astonishment at

his nephew's dulness. What the devil else could it have been. The offer was too good to be sneezed at. I closed at once. Luckily too, I had saved the monkeys. So we shall do well enough. You will be delighted with them."

"But, my dear sir," broke in Frank, "I cannot allow my mother's happiness or health to be affected by the introduction of such a brute as your rattlesnake. You are my uncle, and are old, and have lost your arm, and I will do my best as I ought to do to work for and support you, but I will not permit you to peril, by your whims, my mother's life."

"You will work for me, boy. Of course you will, I know all that; and as for your mother's life, it is in no danger, for I have spiked the enemy's guns."

"Spiked his guns!"

"Yes. I gave the funny little fellow a dose of opium one day, and before he got his peepers open again, I pulled his fangs out. So now he is as harmless as an infant, and

only rattles his tail at times by way of amusement."

Frank groaned.

"Pooh! boy," said his new relative, in consolation," don't fret yourself. It's all because you have had the misfortune to be brought up in this outlandish stupid country. Ah! if you had only the advantage of being a year in the camp of Jung Jow Cheribow. But habit is everything, and in a few days you and Madam Delamere will get accustomed to my little ways."

The worthy Captain's prophecy seemed little likely to be fulfilled. He abused the food — criticised the cookery — turned the house topsy-turvy—and ere the week was over, brought his offences to the climax, by being surprised in the very act of imprinting a salute on the lips of the chaste Betsy. Zeno and his fellow Stoics might have been meritorious persons in their way, but it was evident that they had not been selected as a model by Uncle John.

CHAPTER IX.

UNCLE JOHN'S ADVENTURES.

"*Ant.* Beseech you, Sir; were you present at this relation?

"*Gent.* I was bye at the opening of the fardel."

WINTER'S TALE.

THE monkeys and the rattlesnake arrived in due course, but Uncle John's "little ways," as he called them, did not become more agreeable from their continuance. To Frank, indeed, they were rather a subject of amusement than otherwise, but as he saw that they gave serious annoyance to Mrs. Delamere, he began to doubt how far it might not be necessary to make over to his restless relative, a portion of their limited income, and request him to take up his quarters elsewhere.

Indeed, some of his doings, and those of his two and four-footed satellites, were sufficient to try the patience of Job. His cockatoo, which rejoiced in the possession of a cage large enough for an ark, screamed from morning till night in every note in the gamut, from the shrillest tenor to the deepest bass. This was bad enough, but what was worse, was, that the melodious bird had been accustomed to a warm latitude, and its proprietor insisted upon its being placed in the neighbourhood of a fire—rather a puzzling proposition considering that fires were not numerous in Laurel Cottage. Something was hinted of the drawing-room, but this was at once negatived by Frank, and the wicker mansion with its tenant sent to the kitchen. It was the only part of the arrangements which gave unqualified satisfaction. The solitary inhabitant of the infernal regions welcomed her new companion with delight. Betsy was conversational, but hitherto she had had no one on whom she could exercise her powers

of oratory. Her feathered friend became at once the object of her eloquence, and when she had said to him "Poll my dear" twenty times in the hour, she felt all that agreeable consciousness which swells the bosom of those who feel that they have spoken, and spoken well.

Poll therefore was provided for. He occupied a place by the side of the kitchen fire, while the rattlesnake took up a corresponding position by that of the drawing-room. The climate of Manchester is not tropical, and Uncle John had endeavoured to make his favourite comfortable by providing it with a bed of luxurious cotton, covering three sides of its cage with flannel, and exposing the fourth to the rays of that which is in England, during half the year, the only substitute for the sun, "the best Wall'send."

The presence of such a reptile by her chair was nuisance enough to Mrs. Delamere, but bad as it was, it was an angel compared to the monkeys. They seemed to have borrowed

the energy of character which pertained to their master. Chained though they were daily to two posts in the summer-house, they ever contrived to escape, and made their way into the garden, the larder, the drawing-room, till at last they succeeded in completing their exploits by flinging down, and smashing one of the china jars of Miss Sophy Weston.

This last feat destroyed Frank's equanimity, and, in his first anger, he would have insisted upon Captain Delamere either dismissing his favourites, or leaving the house himself, but his mother would not hear of it.

"No, no, my dear boy," said she. "He is your uncle, and your father's brother. We must do nothing so harsh. Besides, recollect the wild life he has led for five and twenty years. It would not be fair to judge of such a man's freaks or fancies according to the standard of conventional Europe. No, no, leave him to me, Frank, and before long I'll get him into good training. You lords of the creation are very great folks in your own

opinion, but depend upon it you are always to be managed by a woman if she goes the right way about it. Now mark my words. Before two months are over, I will manage Uncle John.''

And Mrs. Delamere kept her word. Had she been one of the ordinary sort of fine ladies whose stereotyped manners, dress, thoughts, and acts had been formed on the universal conventional model, she would have failed; for Uncle John had an intense contempt for the general class of fair ones, who to use the language of a female writer are distinguished from each other only by their ringlets, and who, without individuality themselves, but reflect in their virtues as in their vices, the fashionable idol of the hour. Now Mrs. Delamere was the very reverse of all this. Warm in her temper, *brusque* in her manner, and out spoken if any thing offended her rigid ideas of right or wrong; her faults were evident, but they were her own. So were her virtues. Honest, decided, straight-forward,

with strong affections, and at the same time, shrewdness, prudence, and common sense, she was just the person to win the good opinion of a man like Captain Delamere, whose strongest principle on earth was a detestation of what he called humbug. Sophy's influence soon became paramount. Uncle John's quick observation had speedily made him acquainted with his sister-in-law's excellent qualities, her affection for her deceased husband and her son—the privations which she willingly submitted to for the purpose of giving himself a home—and most of all the good temper with which she bore his whims, and the sayings and doings of his favourites.

By Jove, said he to himself on the eventful day on which the monkey had smashed the china-jar, and when, instead of the violent exclamations he had expected, Mrs. Delamere had intimated the disaster by a gentle shake of the head, accompanied by :

"See what your naughty monkey has been doing, Captain Delamere."

"By Jove! that sister-in-law of mine is a jewel of a woman; I must see that these brutes don't do any more mischief in the drawing-room. I must have a cage made for them."

The new prison was ordered forthwith, and the playful Jacko and his brother committed to durance vile. As the weather too became finer, the rattlesnake was transported to the Captain's bed-room, and placed within reach of the sunshine in the window; while Uncle John himself transferred his person and his hookah to a red-brick summer-house in the corner of the garden, with a window overlooking the public road; and there in turban or high Persian cap and dressing-gown, the worthy man spent four-fifths of the day in puffing the Latakia through his nostrils, and enduring with complacent philosophy the scrutinising admiration of the passengers and the neighbouring children.

His fortunes too seemed to improve. Ever

since his arrival, he had kept up a constant correspondence with London, though he had never condescended to inform his two relatives of its object. Now, however, the secret was to be revealed. One day at the breakfast-table Uncle John received a letter. His face as he read it became radiant with joy.

"Aha!" said he, "I am in clover at last."

"Agreeable news, I hope," said Mrs. Delamere.

"First rate, Madam Delamere," was the reply. "I sent home some diamonds before me, and my agent tells me he has sold them for fifteen hundred pounds. Seventy-five pounds a year, Madam Delamere, only think of that! So I shall no longer be a burthen on your mother, Frank. I shall pay her a pound a week for my board, and the rest will go to buy me tobacco, for I have clothes enough to last me two life-times."

"Well, uncle, I am glad to hear you are

independant; but how did you come by the diamonds."

"Aha, lad, that is part of the pay I got for serving Jung Jow Cheribow."

"Pay! A King pay his army in diamonds!"

"No, no. Jung Jow never paid anybody. His army always paid themselves."

"And how did you get this?"

"Why, you must understand that we were sacking a town, and as I was passing a handsome house, I heard a devil of a catterwauling inside. I thought I might as well see what the fun was, so in I got. There was no need to ask my way. There was yelling enough to wake the dead. The sound led me to the Zenana, and there I found a fat pot-bellied fellow of a Parsee on the floor, with three of the camp followers, making drafts on his exchequer."

"Making drafts on his exchequer!"

"Yes, they wanted the old chap to tell where his money was, and as you may as

soon skin a Parsee as attempt to get anything out of him, they had run a scarf round his throat, and they gave it a tug from time to time by way of quickening the payments."

"And so he was crying out."

"He cry out! By Jove, he was long past that. He was black in the face. It was some of his Venuses that were kicking up such a hullabaloo.

"And what did you do?" said Frank.

"Pitied the poor old man, I don't doubt," said Mrs. Delamere, "and released him."

"Pitied, Madam Delamere! I never pitied anything but that martyred jewel of a boa that was drowned to please those Jezabels in the cuddy, but I did release him."

"Ah! I knew it," said his sister-in-law; "you are not so cruel as you affect to be."

"Pooh! pooh!" said the Captain, with great indignation. "All nonsense that sentiment. No, no, but I knew that these camp-followers had the nose of a slewth-hound for

a money-bag, and I came to the conclusion that if gold mohurs were the order of the day, they might as well be in my pocket as theirs. So I told the rascals to be off."

"And did they go?"

"One went."

"And what became of the other two?"

"Ah! they were obstinate. So I was under the disagreeable necessity of giving one a tap on the crown. His head must have been very soft, for he went down like a shot; and so I thought I might as well floor the other to keep him company."

"Well, and then, my dear uncle?" said Frank.

"Why then of course, I took the scarf off the Baboo's neck."

"Ah! I knew it," said Mrs. Delamere, with enthusiasm; "you could not help being merciful."

"Pooh, pooh, Madam Delamere!" said her brother-in-law, regarding her with a look of infinite contempt. "If the fat swine of a

fire-worshipper had died, who was to tell me the road to the money-bags?"

"And the old man recovered and rewarded you liberally."

"He, the scoundrel! he offered me a dirty hundred rupees."

"What did you do?"

"Went to the window and shouted out *Qui hi*, loud enough to be heard at the end of the street. I was indifferently well known to Jung Jow's people, and I had fifty ragamuffins at my elbow in a minute. 'Oh, Rustum,' said the Parsee (the cunning old rogue wanted to tickle my vanity by calling me Rustum,) 'Oh, Rustum,' said he, 'what art thou about to do?' 'To give your unbelieving throat to the true worshippers,' said I. The old chap set up a yell that would have frightened Old Nick; but it would not do. So when he found that I was as wide-awake as himself, he came to terms at once. He offered me gold, but the diamonds were more convenient; so I stuffed half a dozen

stones into my girdle, turned the rascals below out of doors, and walked off. I'faith they have turned out not amiss."

Frank looked in astonishment; but Mrs. Delamere, too well acquainted, from her Indian life, with the reality of such scenes to feel any surprise, made no remark.

"But I don't understand," said she at length, "how you have never mentioned to us, Jung Jow's great General. When I was in India, I heard people constantly speaking of an Italian in his service, to whom it was said he was indebted for most of his successes, and indeed for his life. A man of the name of Gianotti."

"Ah, ha!" said Uncle John, looking at his sister-in-law with a curious expression of countenance. "So you have heard of Gianotti."

"Of course I have," said Mrs. Delamere. "Who in India has not?"

"And what do you know of him"

"Nothing but that he was an Italian, and

was in high favour with the Rajah. But since I left India I have lost sight of him. Can you tell me anything of his future history?"

"Of course I can," said Uncle John. But it's a devilish long story."

"Well if it be, Captain Delamere," said his sister-in-law with a smile, "the better opportunity you have of exhibiting your gallantry by complying with a lady's request; but seriously," continued she "I have a great curiosity to hear something of a man whose name was in everybody's mouth, but whom few had seen, and of whose real history no one seemed to know anything."

"Why, as to *real* histories Madam Delamere," said Uncle John with one of his sardonic grins," I never was very good at telling them. But as you wish to learn about this Gianotti chap, I must, as that skipper fellow who drowned my boa used to say, 'spin you a yarn.'"

And having compounded for himself a

fresh tumbler of brandy pawnee, and stretching himself in his easy chair, for by a fresh piece of extravagance, Uncle John had added two of the largest and most luxurious pattern to the furniture of the drawing-room, the worthy soldier of Jung Jow Cheribow commenced as follows.

CHAPTER X.

GIANOTTI.

"There was formerly a Sultan of Egypt, who was beneficent and liberal. I had the honour of being one of the Viziers of the same Sultan, jointly with your uncle, who, I believe, is still alive."

ARABIAN NIGHTS.

"Upon my soul, Frank, this is what I call dignifie d Here am I, sitting in state, and you and your mother, as mum as a couple of mice in the inside of a double Gloucester, waiting, as the novel spinning folks say, 'in breathless interest,' the commencement of my story. Why, it's grand—it's impressive—it's classic, by Jove! What

would they have said of it at Eton? Eh! you don't know? Then I'll tell you.

"Conticuere omnes, intentique ora tenebant,
Inde toro pater Æneas sic ortus ab alto.
Infandum, Regina, jubes renovare dolorem."

"There's for you, Frank. Devilish happy that allusion to your mother—Regina. Eh? Though you are just off the hooks, I doubt if you could have beaten that. But I see Madam Delamere, that you are getting impatient; so here's to my story.

"I knew Gianotti as well as I know myself. He was a clever fellow, was Gianotti. He arrived in Jung Jow's country without a farthing, but he was a shrewd chap, and soon found out that there was a plan for deposing the Rajah, and putting his cousin on the musnud. So he made his calculations. All the best officers in the army were backing the new man. There was no chance of promotion by joining them. There were too many to provide for. So he

thought it would pay best to stick to the powers that were, and he told Jung Jow of the devilry that was afoot."

"And what said the Rajah?"

"The drunken old fool called him a lying infidel, and would not believe a word of it."

"And the hot-headed Italian no doubt went off in a huff," said Frank.

"Not such an ass. Gianotti had provided himself with full proofs of the conspiracy, and he produced them. I wish you had seen Jung Jow's face. I mean," said Uncle John, correcting himself, "that Gianotti told me that he looked uncommon queer."

"I don't wonder at it," said Mrs. Delamere. "Revolutions in India are serious things."

"Faith, so was this—a regular touch and go affair. The outbreak was to take place that very night, and the Rajah was to have his throat comfortably cut in his own tent. You cannot conceive what a funk the poor beggar was in."

"No wonder," said Frank; "and what did Gianotti?"

"'Pon my soul, he went about it beautifully. If he had been an Oxford Professor, he could not have discussed the matter more logically.

"'It's all up with your highness,' said Gianotti to the Rajah, 'Your cousin, Bajee Rao, the Vizier, and your six best officers, are in league to twist your weazand to-night. So you see it's all up with you. This comes of your thinking of nothing but dancing-girls and drinking brandy.'

"I thought I might as well pitch the moral a little into him."

"*You* pitch the moral into him?" said Frank, with astonishment.

"Did I say 'I?'" said Uncle John, with something of confusion. "Of course I meant Gianotti. But you know, boy," continued he, with one of his satirical grins, most people when they tell a story, contrive to make themselves the hero of it, and I

fear it is rather a weakness of mine. I have lived so long in that confounded lying country, that I have rather caught an ugly habit of calling other people's adventures my own."

"But the Rajah, my dear Sir," said Mrs. Delamere, "what did he?"

"What did he? why, he walked round and round the room, tearing his beard, knocking his head against the walls, and calling out, 'Istafer Alla!—Istafer Alla!"

"'It *is* a bit of a mess,' said Gianotti.

"'What would I *not* give to the man that would get me out of it,' said Jung Jow.

"'What *would* you give?' said Gianotti.

"'I would give a lac of rupees,' screamed the Rajah.

"'Pooh! pooh! One would suppose you were thinking of saving your turban, and not the head that's inside of it,' said Gianotti.

"'I'd give all that I have in the world,' sobbed Jung Jow.

"'That's speaking like a man of sense,' said Gianotti."

"Well, but to the result, my dear Uncle."

"You are impatient, boy, but in two words, Gianotti showed the Rajah that the only way to save his throat was to cut Bajee Rao's, and those of the Vizier, and the other six fellows that were backing him.

"'Fine talking,' said the Rajah. 'They have won over the troops, no doubt, and where shall I find the man who will be mad enough to undertake to arrest them?'

"'He is standing beside you,' said Gianotti.

"'You!' said the Rajah. "You have not been six months at my Court. How can I trust you? I know little of you.'

"'If you don't take my advice, you are likely to know still less of me by this time to-morrow,' said Gianotti, and he coughed.

"He had an ugly way of coughing, that chap, when he said anything unpleasant—there, just so," said the Captain, and he gave them a specimen of the jugular articulation of the general of Jung Jow. He had probably

taken the trouble of copying his Indian friend, for both Frank and his mother internally remarked that it was precisely the cough that was uttered twenty times a day, in moments of irritation by Uncle John.

"But proceed, my dear Sir," said Mrs. Delamere, "I am dying to know the end of the story."

"Well, Madam Delamere," said her brother-in-law, "to make a long story short, Gianotti made his own terms. Upon condition that he was to be named Vizier and Commander-in-Chief, he agreed to save Jung Jow's neck, and put down the conspiracy. A clever fellow that Gianotti. He had been looking forward to some outbreak of the sort, and had got together some thirty dare-devils like himself. I was of the number. I had been in the country about a week, and Gianotti had opened himself to me. We both saw that our only chance of getting on in the world was by running some desperate

risk, and now that the time was come we did not flinch from it."

"But the catastrophe, my dear Sir, the catastrophe," said Mrs. Delamere.

"Well, well, Madam Delamere, here it is. We had learned that the Rajah was to be murdered at midnight, and that the eight leading conspirators were to meet disguised in the tent of one of their number, a fellow called Ackbar Ali, at eleven, where half an hour after they were to be joined by some twenty or thirty more—not in a body, but singly, for fear of exciting suspicion. They were then to go to the Rajah's tent, and make a Nadir Shah business of it. It was evident, thus that our only chance of success was by striking the blow within the half-hour between the meeting of the leading men, and their being joined by their confederates. So our folks were warned, and a little after ten o'clock, nineteen of us met in my quarters. We were all armed to the teeth, and plucky

fellows enough; but I promise you we looked devilish queer at each other, for it was a neck-or-nothing job, and we felt that we should probably never look upon our fellows' faces again.

"At length came a quarter to eleven. It was time to move, and now came the real pinch of the business; for if we arrived five minutes too soon, or too late, we were equally lost men. Luckily Gianotti had a Bheel in his service, a chap from one of these robber tribes of Upper India, who will steal a sheet from under a man without waking him. Well, when we were discussing whether we ought to be off, I bethought me of the Bheel. Luckily the fellow was close by, so I sent him on the scout to Akbar Ali's tent; and I promised, if he brought us immediate intelligence of who was within it to give him ten gold mohurs; for my friend had filled his pockets when at the Rajah's, as we thought it well to be prepared for events, and had our best horses picqueted outside the camp. The rascal was not gone above ten minutes

but I remember that I thought it an age, and my heart all the time kept thumping against my ribs. At last our spy came back. He had done his work well. He had been in the very midst of them. He had crept under the canvass of the tent, and reported that there were eight men present, two of whom he had recognised to be Bajee Rao and the Vizier. There was not a moment to be lost, and we immediately started. As everything depended upon Gianotti's keeping his head upon his shoulders, for he was the only one known to all the party, it was agreed that I should lead the way, and I did so, with my hand upon the Bheel's collar. 'Twenty more gold mohurs for you, you scoundrel,' said I, 'if you take us safe to Akbar Ali's.' The fellow grinned, and we moved off, one by one, and with steps as noiseless as a snow-flake.

"The night was stormy; I shall never forget it. The moon was near the full, but luckily dark clouds swept constantly across

her surface, and we only moved when we had the benefit of their shadow. At one time, when the sky was clear for upwards of five minutes, I thought that all was lost. Had I been allowed to yield to my impatience, I should have rushed on, and ruined everything; but our little tawney friend, who had, as the heavens cleared, got us under the shadow of the wall of a ruined caravanserai, refused to budge a step. How eagerly we watched the sky, and how we cursed its brightness. At length the welcome dark masses of vapour again showed themselves. They came on with hurricane speed, and in another minute everything was black as midnight. Not a moment was lost. Two hundred yards more brought us to Akbar Ali's tent.

It was well lighted, so as to make its tenants easily discernable. We rushed in, and the work was soon done. I shot the Vizier as I entered, for I had a pistol in my left hand, and cut down Akbar Ali with my

sabre. Seven of the eight were soon disposed of. The remaining man endeavoured to escape in the same fashion in which the Bheel had entered, under the canvass of the tent. But Blackie was a trump. He proved an ally as well as a guide, for his quick glance observed him on the ground, and ere the fellow could free himself from the tent-ropes, the Bheel put his knife into his throat.

"The following morning Jung Jow held a divan. To the assembled nobles he declared the danger which had threatened him, and to prove his gratitude, announced his intention of advancing his preserver to the rank of Vizier. Gianotti became Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister appointed Captain John Delamere, Master of the Horse."

"And what kind of Vizier did Gianotti make," said Mrs. Delamere.

"First-rate! And lucky it was so; for Jung Jow had got such a fright that he took to brandy worse than ever. So the whole government was laid upon Gianotti's

shoulders. Wonderful the reformations he made!"

"And what were they?" said Frank.

"The first thing he did was to twist the necks of half a dozen of the tax-gatherers. The accuracy of their successors was astonishing. You would have supposed that every one of them had been brought up by Cocker. The very first year the revenue rose fifty lacs."

"A fine thing for the Rajah," said Frank.

"Nay, it was not altogether clear gain. Gianotti took ten lacs for his own perquisite."

"Ten lacs," said Frank. "How much is that?"

"About one hundred thousand pounds."

"A hundred thousand pounds a-year as salary for a minister! Monstrous!"

"Pooh, pooh! moderate my dear boy, positively moderate. You forget that in India, a Prime Minister's head is never safe on his shoulders for five minutes together,

and a man should be paid in proportion to the risk. Besides, it cost Jung Jow nothing. It all came out of the pockets of the rascally tax-gatherers."

"And what did he do with all this money," said Mrs. Delamere. "Store it up in his own house?"

"Not such an ass. As the mopusses came in, he quietly invested them with the Parsee trading-fellows, and the English banks at Bombay."

"And how long did these good times last?" said Mrs. Delamere.

"For twenty years—and they might have lasted for twice twenty had it not been for Jung Jow. But the Rajah would not be controlled. The Shah of Persia had sent him a cook from Teheran—a regular *Cordon bleu*—so what between the fellow's pillaus and the brandy, Jung Jow's corporation got every day bigger, and his neck shorter. I knew it could not last long. 'Gianotti,' says I, 'he will be off like a rocket.' 'Think so,'

says he. 'As sure as the melting of the blood of San Gennaro,' says I, 'I have seen the old boy nearly black in the face twice already.' Gianotti looked devilish glum. 'What is in the wind now,' says I. 'If Jung Jow *goes*,' says he, 'the sooner we *go*, too, the better, for this place will be too hot to hold us.' I shook my head. 'Jung Jow has no son,' says he. 'That's bad,' says I. 'He has a brother, three nephews, and two cousins, all wanting to be Rajah.' 'That is worse still,' says I. 'As soon as the breath is out of the body all six will make a grab at the treasury.' 'That is worst of all,' said I So we looked at each other for a minute without saying a word."

"Why, the position was rather perplexing," said Mrs. Delamere, with a laugh.

"Uncommon queer cards to play. No doubt of it, Madam Delamere, but we got through it. Now you must understand, Frank, that Gianotti and I inhabited a wing of the Palace, and for greater security the treasury

was next to the Vizier's quarters, and had its door opening from the very room in which we were sitting. 'So you think the princes will make a dash at the rupees.' 'Not a doubt of it.' 'A case of first come first served,' said I. 'You are right, Signor Delmare,' says he—he always called me Signor Delmare. 'I say, Gianotti,' said I, and I tipped him the wink, 'we are next door to the treasury. Why should not we be the first to rap at it.' Wonderful sharp chap to take a hint was Gianotti. So he winks back to me, and he says: 'Not a bad thought, Signor Delmare, but when we get inside what are we to do with the contents?' 'Trust to the camels,' says I."

"The camels!" said Frank, in astonishment.

"Yes, boy, the camels. There is nothing like a fast-trotting maherrie for doing work, when quick march is the word for a week together. So as Gianotti and I were always in the field, and wished to make ourselves

comfortable, and have a few chaps beside us that we could depend upon, we had gradually picked up some forty black slaves, regular dare devils, whom we had mounted upon camels, every man leading a pack camel beside that which he rode. We had chopped and changed, bought and sold men and cattle, till at last there was not a more plucky little body guard, or a faster camel corps in all India. The scoundrels were armed to the teeth, and the maherries could trot. By Jove! when you were once on their backs, you might say good bye to Mahratta, or Pindaree, or the fastest cavalry that Hyder Ali ever brought together."

"But to your story," said Mrs. Delamere.

"Odd I had forgot," said her worthy relative. "You know I had mentioned the camels to Gianotti." 'And what do you advise,' said he. 'The thing is as plain as a pike-staff,' said I. 'The Ramadhan will be over in a fortnight, and as sure as fate, with the first booze that takes place after it, Jung Jow

will go off like a lamb.' 'Pooh,' said he; 'you are a great *medico*, Signor Delmare,' said Gianotti, 'your lancet has twice brought the prince round already, and it will do so again.'"

"Your lancet," said his sister-in-law in astonishment.

"Yes," said her imperturbable relative, "I learned to use it from a renegade chap of a French surgeon in Egypt, and had twice, by slicing a vein, brought Jung Jow back after he was as black in the face as a Newcastle collier, and that was the reason Gianotti called me a great *medico*. 'Don't trust to that old fellow,' says I. 'He has had two touches of apoplexy already. Nobody ever got over the third—mark my words—he's booked for the day after the Ramadhan.' 'And what would you do?' said the Vizier. 'You know,' said I, 'our baggage-camels have their packs made to fit them as nicely as saddle-bags. Just have them quietly brought up here, all filled as if ready for a

march. Take them into the treasury. Gut them, and fill them with gold mohurs. You can stuff a shawl in their mouths now and then as a make believe; but remember, don't be too greedy. Not more than two hundred weight for each camel; and see that the cattle be in prime order, and our black tulips all in the palace on the day after Ramadhan. You will see we shall need both.' 'But where would you go?' said Gianotti. 'Why, you know,' says I, 'Prince Shum Shu, the rajah's brother, lives within five coss of the English frontier; we had better go and make terms with him.' 'And if he should not agree?' said Gianotti, with a leer. 'Well, then,' says I, 'it is an hour's gallop, and we can snap our fingers at him.' 'We will go to Shumshubad,' said Gianotti."

"You are insufferable, Uncle John; your story never advances."

"I'll go ahead now, Madam Delamere," said the worthy Captain. "Faith I was a true prophet. On the night after Lent was

over—you know the Ramadhan is the Mahometan Lent — Jung Jow did just what I said. He took to the pillaus and the brandy, and no mistake. I expected the result, so instead of going to bed, I sat up smoking a hookah with the Vizier. Well, just before twelve o'clock, we heard an infernal row below, and immediately after a black chap of a eunuch, with his eyes nearly starting out of his head with terror, rushed in to say that Jung Jow had gone off in a fit, and calling for me and my lancets."

"And was he really dead this time?"

"Dead as a door nail, Madam Delamere. But I anticipate. I put the lancet in my pocket and hurried after the messenger. They had lifted the poor beggar into his bed. The room was crowded, but I turned every body out, and took a look at the old fellow. As soon as I saw Jung Jow's face, I knew it was no use, but I opened a vein. The blood would not flow. It is time for me to be off,

thought I, so I pulled the clothes over the Rajah, made him decent, and left him. I had got half way to the door. I don't know what came over me. It was a sort of choking in the throat. I could not help going back to take another look at him. The old fellow had been kind to me; and, upon my soul, I am ashamed to confess it a sort of moisture came into my eyes, and I could not help kissing the dead man's hand."

"You need not be ashamed of the feeling," said Mrs. Delamere; "I do not like you the worse for it, Uncle John."

"Pooh! pooh!" said the Captain, "don't talk sentiment. The whimpering could do no good. Madam Delamere; so I made for the door, and as soon as I got outside, I locked it, and put the key in my pocket. Kara Mustapha, said I to the head eunuch; the Rajah sleeps. He must not be disturbed till midday. If before the sun throws his shadows to the eastward, you, or any one else

enter that room, your head shall answer for it. The fellow was an Ispahani slave, and was always thrusting his Persian in one's face. '*Bei chusm!*' said he. 'On my eyes be it. Your lordship shall be obeyed.' In two minutes more, I was with Gianotti. 'It's all over,' said he, as soon as he saw my face. 'All over,' said I; 'and the sooner we are off the better.' We opened the treasury, and there were the camel packs all filled. We dragged them into Gianotti's room. 'But the diamonds,' said I. 'They are too valuable to trust to these fellows to carry, so I'll take them myself,' said the cunning beggar. You could not steal a march upon Gianotti. 'It is all very fine, my good fellow,' said I, 'but I would rather take the trouble of carrying my own share myself.' 'It's too late to argue that point now,' said he with a grin. 'We had better be off.' 'And where,' said I, 'in case any little accident happens to you on the road am I to hunt for them?' He did

not like the look I gave him, I promise you, so he stammered out, 'everything above board, my good fellow. I have got them in my saddle-bags.' 'With two dozen of the biggest ones in your waist-shawl, and your turban,' says I; 'I know where to look for them, master Gianotti.'"

"But, my dear Uncle John," said Mrs. Delamere, "how did you get away?"

"You are impatient, Madam Delamere," said the narrator. "It was now all plain sailing. The black fellows and the packs were soon mounted, and in a quarter of an hour we were off.

"It was a beautiful night, or rather morning, for it wanted scarce half an hour of dawn; but it was still dark, for the stars had dimmed before the approach of day. There was not a breath of air stirring, and the only sound that broke upon the ear as we paced the deserted streets, was the dull echo of the hoofs of the maherries, and the

cry of the Muezzin, as from the top of the minaret he summoned the Mussulmen to prayer. Thirty years earlier, the scene would have made me poetical, but it was no time for sentiment. In a few minutes, we reached the Arab guard and the gate.

"You may suppose what a rumpus there was; and the astonishment of the officer in charge when he recognised the Vizier. 'Your lordship!' said he. 'Even I, Cossim Beg,' said Gianotti, taking him aside. 'Azrael, the angel of death, has spread his wings over the Rajah, and ere the day be passed, his Highness will have seen the black-eyed girls of Paradise. I go to announce to Prince Shum Shu his approaching succession.' 'And the pack camels?' said Cossim Beg. 'Specie for the Prince,' whispered Gianotti. Cossim Beg gave a grin. 'Your lordship will speak a good word for me?' said he. 'When I return,' said Gianotti, 'you shall be a Khan.' '*Salaam*

Aleikoum, a good journey to your Excellency,' said Cossim Beg. '*Aleikoum Salaam*,' we replied, and we departed.

"Oh, Uncle John, I am so happy you got outside!" said Mrs. Delamere.

"'Pon my soul, and so was I," responded her worthy relative; "and so, I warrant, was Gianotti. By Jove, we did not let the grass grow to our heels. We did sixty miles a day. We dropped a camel now and then, but we had no time to pick t up. At last, on the afternoon of the fifth day, we saw the towers of Sumshubad."

"Ah! ha! Uncle John," said Mrs. Delamere, "that was approaching dangerous ground."

"By my life, Madam Delamere," said her brother-in-law, regarding her with intense admiration, "you would have made no bad Vizier for Jung Jow. That is precisely what I thought myself, and what I said to Gianotti.

"'Old fellow,' says I, 'there's Shumshu-bad.'

"'I see it,' says he.

"'In two hours we shall be sunning ourselves in the light of the countenance of his Highness,' says I.

"'*Cospetto !*' says he.

"I saw from the way he said it, he would rather be sunning himself anywhere else.

"'The Prince is curious,' says I.

"'As a young father-confessor,' says he.

"'He is greedy,' says I.

"'Sucks like a horse-leech,' says he.

"'Should'nt wonder if he'd be poking his fingers into our saddle-bags,' says I.

"'Fumble them to the bottom,' says he.

"'Sweat our gold mohurs a bit,' says I.

"'He won't leave us a carlino,' says he.

"'Hollo, old chap !' says I. 'Hold hard there. I didn't gut Jung Jow's treasury to fill the pockets of Prince Shum Shu. So if

that's like to be the tune, we had better change the step. We have got the English frontier a few coss on our right. I vote we cross it. There will be smugger quarters to-night in John Company's country, than in Shumshubad.'

"Faith, he took my advice, and before the sun went down, we were safe within the territories of the Tea-caddy folk."

"And what did you then?"

"Oh! after that it was easy work. We took it leisurely, and in about a fortnight we got to Bombay. We had lost five camels on the road, but all the rest and their packs were safe enough. So we sold the maherries, and gave the black chaps their freedom."

"You must have been immensely rich," said Mrs. Delemere.

"Not amiss," said Uncle John, "but somehow or other the coin did not stick to my fingers. I got into bad company and, rattled the bones, and cried 'seven's the main,' till I had scarce a piece left."

"And so you lost everything?"

"No, no, I kept money enough to pay my passage home. I thought, you know, I had Delamere Court under my lee; and then I had these trashy diamonds which I sold for fifteen hundred pounds. By good luck I had sent them to Bombay after I had got them from the Baboo, and the Parsee chap, to whom they had been remitted, had, before my arrival, forwarded them to England."

"And did Gianotti ape you in this extravagance."

"No, no! A wide awake chap was Gianotti. He spent three months at the salt-water in converting his gold mohurs into bills, and taking up the money he had invested with the Parsees and the banking fellows."

"And what was he worth?"

"Heaven knows, a million and a half at least."

"And what has become of him?"

"He sailed for Europe, the same time I

did. He said he had some poor relations at home, and that he intended, if they were worth their salt, to give them better amusement than squatting all day at the end of the Toledo, and sucking in macaroni by the yard."

"And you, Uncle John," said Mrs. Delamere, holding up her finger and shaking it at him. "Naughty, naughty Uncle John. You too who were so rich; and to think that for a three months' whim you have made yourself poor."

"Poor! Madam Delamere, pooh, nonsense; did not I tell you this morning that I had just sold my diamonds for fifteen hundred pounds, and would you not, if you had known as much yesterday, thought me a positive nabob, and have not I a cockatoo, two monkeys, and a rattlesnake. Poor indeed!" and Uncle John snuffed the air with indignation.

There was a dead silence for about a minute.

"It is a strange tale," muttered Mrs. Delamere to herself.

"A very extraordinary one," said Frank.

The worthy Captain bent forward in his chair, and from under his large shaggy eyebrows cast at his relatives one of those keen Mephistophiles glances which were peculiar to him. Whatever was the cause of the scrutiny, the result was apparently satisfactory, for the friend of Jung Jow flung himself back again into the seat, in his usual lounging attitude, and re-echoed the remark of his sister-in-law.

"Right, Madam Delamere. It is a rum story—very!"

And so ended the narrative of Uncle John.

CHAPTER XI.

SALE OF DELAMERE COURT.

"His house, his house, his heritage, his lands."
CHILDE HAROLD.

SCARCE two months had elapsed since Captain Delamere had established his menagerie in Laurel Cottage, and he had already tired of zoology. In fact his occupation was gone. The monkeys were caged up—the cockatoo had conceived an affection for Betsy—and the rattlesnake, becoming lively under the influence of the returning sun, no longer needed either coddling or cotton. The health of his animals was an auspicious event, but it seemed, nevertheless, likely to rob him of his own, for the brutes gave him

nothing to do, and their proprietor, though he had been in Italy, was no admirer of the "Dolce far niente," either in theory or practice. The worthy man became first bilious, then irritable, and was in the fair way of making, by his temper, the cottage positively intolerable, when, fortunately for its inmates, he plunged heart and soul into a new mania. Captain Delamere became a politician.

The transfer of his interest from monkeys to men, in no degree, however, benefited his relatives. The Rajah's ex-master of the horse was eager to display his talents on his new *champ de battaille;* and as, with his usual modesty, he never doubted that the subject, most agreeable to himself, must necessarily be most agreeable to everybody else, he spent half the evening in declamation.

His discourses were general enough, for they sought their illustrations as far back as the Deluge; but they were not distin-

tinguished for their philanthrophy. In fact, Uncle John seemed to have taken the Philippics for his model, and abused everything and everybody. For the most part, he commenced with his own country, and, after having demolished Pitt and the government, proceeded to show his impartiality by attacking with equal acrimony Fox and the Opposition. He would then denounce individually, and in their turn, the several dynasties of Europe; their Sovereigns and bureaucracies; their establishments, civil and military; and generally concluded his speech—for it deserved the name—by a brilliant peroration, in which he endeavoured to show what a refreshing contrast to such misrule and misrulers was presented by the manner, in which had been administered the territories of the late Jung Jow Cheribow; where, to believe the speaker, the Golden Age had been revived for the benefit of the inhabitants; and where, if any credence was to be given to sundry nods,

and winks, and shakings of the head, and inuendoes and half-muttered sentences, much of this blissful state of things was the result of the exertions of him, Captain Delamere.

The perpetual oratorising was bad enough, but what was worse was, that the new passion was expensive as well as tiresome; for to minister to it, the "Courier" and "Morning Chronicle" were ordered from London; and, true to their summons, exhibited themselves unfailingly at the breakfast-table. The appearance of *two* organs of the press was no promising augury of future economy, and Mrs. Delamere saw, and pondered, and calculated, and groaned in spirit.

"This is dreadful, my dear Frank!" said she to her son, in a confidential *tête-à-tête*; "your uncle will ruin us altogether. He has but twenty-five pounds a year to supply him with clothes, and his tobacco, and other luxuries; and here at the first start he spends, let me see, yes, positively, fifteen pounds twelve in daily papers. He will ruin us, I say. If

he had ordered merely the 'Courier,' though the expense would still have been above his means, I could have excused it; for the 'Courier' is Tory, and Tory the Delameres ever have been, and are, and will be. But what could induce him to send for the 'Chronicle,' which does nothing else but contradict point blank everything the other paper says. It is positively beyond my comprehension."

It was puzzling; but poor Sophy would have better understood the cause, if she had recollected that her Indian relative was a man of despotic temper and habits, and that men of despotic temper and habits are, for the most part, zealous patrons of liberal newspapers. The journals which preach the doctrine of resistance flatter unconsciously the pugnacious temperament of him who has received from nature the perpetual inclination to resist, and the energetic friend of Jung Jow, who, had he possessed the power, would have annihilated everything and every-

body that, in the slightest degree, thwarted his whims, was, upon all other occasions, when his personal volition was not interfered with, a great admirer of individual liberty, and a stout supporter of the rights of the people.

His epistolary acquaintance too seemed on the increase, for, in addition to the printed claims on his attention, every morning brought him two or three letters, some of them large oblong packages, with tremendous postages marked on the outside. Fortunately the £. s. d. hieroglyphics were always in red ink. Uncle John seemed to have the most obliging class of correspondents. They always prepaid their communications.

Some of these appeared to be important, and to require instant reply, for the worthy man neglected "Courier" and "Chronicle" as he had before neglected rattlesnake and cockatoo, and spent two thirds of the day in his room, from which he as regularly sallied every afternoon, for the purpose, it

was understood, of depositing with his own hands his lucubrations in the post-office.

To whom the missives were addressed, no one knew. With regard to their object there was less mystery. All, according to the account of the friend of Jung Jow, were devoted to obtaining a proper investment for his fifteen hundred pounds. Since the days of Adam, never had been greater care exhibited in the selection of a security.

Nor was this anxiety of Uncle John's, for the preservation of what little remained of his wealth, limited to letter-writing. From time to time he made excursions to London, and, to believe himself, profitable ones. It was whispered that it was the intention of some patriotic members of the House of Commons to do good service to the country, by impeaching some great political malefactors, who, like Hastings, had committed the unpardonable misdemeanour of doubling the power and extent of our Indian empire. The charges were in many languages, and

Uncle John, who from his polyglot acquaintance with the Indian tongues, would have been a valuable interpreter in the days of the Tower of Babel, had been employed to translate them. Such at least was his own version of the story, though he never would condescend to announce the names, or the specific objects of his employers. Apparently, however, they paid well, for twice he came back with fifty pounds in his pocket.

But the correspondence of Laurel Cottage was not limited to Jung Jow's master of the horse. Mrs. Delamere had many sincere friends, and strange to say, they had not deserted her in her poverty. These letters were frequent. Frank, too, from time to time received an epistle from Tom Smith. The worthy attorney, as honest a soul as ever breathed, had been entrusted with the sale of Delamere Court. At his suggestion, Frank had executed a trust deed for the benefit of his creditors, and the head of a

great banking firm in London, which for a century had bee the recipient of the loose monies of the house of Delamere, had consented to act as trustee. As the highest confidence was placed in that gentleman and his mercantile knowledge, Frank, at the suggestion of his law agent, had invested him with the fullest powers as to fixing the time of sale, the terms and the price; and now, having neither the means nor the will to interfere, poor Frank awaited quietly the event.

A letter at length intimated to him that the estate was to be speedily advertised, and shortly after appeared a "Morning Chronicle," a column of which, breathing all the eloquence of George Robins, gave to the world an account of the "unrivalled domain," its woods and waters, its Elizabethan manor-house, the number of its farms, its political influence. Frank had always admired much his paternal inheritance, but he perhaps never admired it more than when he read the de-

scription of it, as it was about to pass away to a stranger.

The advertisement intimated that the whole property was to be sold in one lot, and by public auction, unless *previously disposed of by private contract*, and the first of the following month was fixed for the day of sale. A letter from Tom Smith further acquainted the proprietor that it had been determined not to fix any price till the day of sale had arrived, but to receive offers from intending purchasers. He added that he conceived four hundred and eighty thousand pounds its utmost value, and that as the debt, including the forty thousand pounds for which Frank had lately become liable, amounted to five hundred and ten thousand pounds, that even then, in the event of the property bringing the highest price anticipated, that Mr. Delamere would be thirty thousand pounds worse than nothing. He added, however, that he hoped the best, and more especially expressed his earnest wish that Mr. Dela-

mere should make no rash arrangements, but calmly await the result of the sale. Frank had no secrets from his mother, or his uncle, and the business letters as they arrived were read aloud for their common benefit. The poor fellow had borne up well till the advertisement in the newspapers, but with its appearance his philosophy vanished, and the young heir, unable to control his emotions, rushed from the room. Mrs. Delamere did not follow him. She knew that silence and solitude at such moments were the best comforters. As for Uncle John, he made a wry face, as if he had got a fit of the gout, and walked off to his monkeys.

"It is an ill wind that blows nobody good," says an old proverb. It is a true one. There are few events which give pain to one member of the human family that do not give pleasure to another. The advertisement that excited despair at Laurel Cottage, created a jubilee at Staunton Lodge. At least, it brought happiness to James

Staunton. It would be more difficult to speculate on the feelings of his heiress. Mary had not loved Frank Delamere, for she had rejected him, and Mary was consistent. But though she had seen in his character much that she deemed fickle and feeble, she could not disguise to herself that he had been an agreeable companion, and that he had great talent, high character, and gentlemanly manners. If these had been Mary's sentiments when Frank was in prosperity, his present misfortunes, overwhelming as they were, but gave them additional strength. The uses of adversity may be sweet to him who is the object of their influence, but for the honour of human nature, it may be added that they exercise also, and not unfrequently, a beneficial power over society; and many who would be disposed to entertain feelings of jealousy, or express themselves in terms of criticism, with regard to the wealthy and the prosperous, shrink alike from the feeling and the language

as unworthy of them, when those the objects of their censure have fallen from their high estate, and been humbled to the dust.

The advertisement, therefore, which delighted the heart of James Staunton, did not, though there was none so deeply interested in it, bring pleasure to his daughter. Mary became first taciturn, then melancholy, complained of head-aches, and at length took to her bed. Her father was in despair. At the cause of her illness, he could not guess. Mary was little fond of mystery, but somehow or other she had never spoken of her visit to the ruins of Fitzallan, or her *tête-à-têtes* in the shrubbery at Lady Carpenter's.

Her altered health, however, could not delay Father Time, or the events which he was bringing upon his wings. As soon as Mr. Staunton had ascertained from the family Esculapius, that his daughter's illness was not dangerous, he proceeded to London to complete what, ever since his excursion to

sea-coast, and to Delamere, had been the great object of his life.

As soon as he reached the capital, he placed himself in personal communication with the head of the banking establishment, who was Frank's trustee, and inquired the price asked for the Delamere estate.

There was none fixed. They were ready to receive offers.

Mr. Staunton expressed his astonishment. The course was an unusual one.

It was nevertheless one which they had thought best for the interest of their client to adopt. If the gentleman chose to make an offer they would consider of it.

Mr. Staunton retired in disgust. For four-and-twenty hours he did nothing.

"It is of no use," said he to himself, "losing one's temper on the subject, I must have the estate."

That very day he offered four hundred thousand pounds for it.

It was rejected.

Two days afterwards he offered four hundred and fifty thousand pounds.

It was rejected also.

James Staunton became fidgety, and for three days was in the sulks. He recovered himself, however, betook himself to the banking-house, and offered five hundred thousand pounds personally to the trustee.

He was not more fortunate than before. Once more the offer was refused.

James Staunton felt his bile rising.

"You know, I suppose," said he to the head of the bank, "who I am?"

"Perfectly, you are Mr. Staunton."

"You are aware that mine is a *bonâ fide* offer?"

"I assume it to be such."

"It is more than the estate is worth."

"Possibly, but I believe we shall be able to get a larger sum for it."

"Pooh, pooh! there is not a man in

England but myself who could table down half a million."

"We shall see."

"So you reject my offer?" said the manufacturer, who was rapidly losing his temper.

"We do."

"Then, sir," said the would-be purchaser, "I withdraw it. I know the estate must be sold to the highest bidder. It is advertised to be sold in one lot. It is not worth more than four hundred and fifty thousand, and for four hundred and fifty thousand will I buy it at the public sale.

"Mr. Staunton will do exactly as he pleases," was the indifferent reply.

James Staunton slapped his hat on his head with a violence which discomposed two-thirds of the powder which decorated the exterior of his upper man, and departed in an overwhelming passion for Grosvenor Square.

A week after, the usual party was collected round the breakfast-table at Laurel

Cottage. Uncle John had returned from London the preceding day in high spirits, and with fifty pounds in his pockets. It was evident that linguists were rising in the market. He had been playing the part of a learned pundit, as he informed them, and had just executed a translation of some charges against the offending functionary from one of the dialects of central India, which had puzzled the Dons of Leadenhall Street, and the professors at Haileybury.

"By Jove," said he, "only think of Jung Jow Cheribow's master of the horse being wiser than the wise men of the East. I doubt if they can go on without me. I should not wonder, if to secure my services, they created for me a professorship of the unknown tongues."

His self-gratulation on his own accomplishments were interrupted by the postman's double rap.

Betsy put a single letter upon the table. It was addressed to Frank, and in Tom Smith's hand-writing. Frank's cheek paled, and his fingers trembled when he opened it,

It announced the sale of Delamere Court. The epistle ran as follows:

"Delamere.

"My dear Sir,

"I am happy to inform you that we have succeeded in selling Delamere for a price higher even than our most extravagant hopes. We have obtained for it five hundred and nine thousand pounds. It may be in your recollection, that I mentioned four hundred and eighty thousand pounds as its full value, so you may well understand that your trustee closed at once with so advantageous an offer, the more especially as the purchasers, who are a great banking firm in Lombard Street, stated distinctly that if it was not accepted, they would decline to bid at a public sale; in which case it would probably have fallen to the other competitor in the market for four hundred and fifty thousand pounds. I may add, however, and I trust that the notification will not give you pain, that the purchase includes books, pic-

tures, plate-glass, furniture of every kind, precisely as it was on the day when Mrs. Delamere and yourself quitted it. We endeavoured to parry this, but without effect, as the purchasers distinctly declared, that if we removed a single portrait they would not hold themselves as bound by the bargain. Under these circumstances, your trustee and I, acquainted as we were with your embarrassments, thought it best to accept the offer. You will now, my dear Sir, be free from debt, with the exception of a single thousand pounds, and I doubt not that, with your energies and talents, in whatever walk of life you employ them, you will soon be able to pay even this, the last of your obligations. I have long had the honour of being connected with your family, and I need hardly say, that if the aid of so humble a person as myself can be of any use to you in your future career, no one will derive greater pleasure in affording it than

"Your obedient servant,

"THOMAS SMITH.

"P.S.—I ought to add that your trustee and myself think there is some party behind the scenes, as the banking-house, the apparent purchasers, have instructed the title-deeds not to be made out to themselves directly, but in trust only, for some person or persons unknown."

Frank read the letter aloud, with quivering lips. When it was done, there was a dead silence.

"It is gone," said he. "The inheritance of my fathers, and which for eight hundred years has been the home of the Delameres. Gone to a stranger, and by my folly." And he buried his face in his arms, and laid his head upon the table, and wept bitterly.

Mrs. Delamere rose quietly from her seat, passed her arm round Frank's neck, kissed his cheek, and mingled her tears with his.

Uncle John steadily contemplated mother and son. For a moment his face lost its usual satirical expression, and there was

something like moisture about his eye. It was but for a moment however.

"Pooh, pooh!" said he; "what is the use of all this snivelling. Better luck next time. So it is no use being down-hearted. Have not I got another fifty pounds by translating that outlandish lingo for those stupid Dolts in Leadenhall Street, and won't that keep the pot boiling for three months to come. So bear up, Frank; and instead of vexing yourself, I wish you would find out who that chap is, who your lawyer fellow says is behind the scenes, as he calls it. He must be well off for the mopusses, I guess, or he could not fork out fifty lacs at a minute's notice. A regular mole, too, burrowing in the dark. By Jove, just like one of Gianotti's tricks. Faith, Frank, if I did not know that the Vizier had been spawned within sight of Mount Vesuvius, I should have sworn that Gianotti was the purchaser of Delamere Court.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHOICE OF A PROFESSION.

"Cyphering is the thing. If a man knows how to cypher, he is sure to grow rich."—SAM SLICK.

WITHIN a week after the receipt of Tom Smith's letter, there arrived an immense packet of parchment, the formal documents which were to convey Frank's heritage to its new owner. The deeds themselves, however, contained nothing to allay the curiosity of Uncle John. They simply stated that they conveyed the property to Messrs. Snicks, Sniggleton and Co., Lombard Street, for the benefit of a correspondent of their house, name unmentioned; and it was in vain that Captain Delamere, who seemed to find an

agreeable occupation for his monotonous existence in endeavouring to sift the mystery, waded through the ribbon-tied and artistically scrolled pages. They told nothing. Frank signed the deeds. His signature was attested after the usual fashion, and he was at last a landless man.

The subject was a painful one, and as if by mutual consent, no allusion to it was made at Laurel Cottage. Notwithstanding, however, the anxiety of his mother to avoid any observations that might revive recollections and produce pain, and even the silence of Captain Delamere, who for the moment seemed to have drilled himself into delicacy, Frank for some weeks seemed sunk in despondency. But time soothes sorrow, and it brought alleviation to that of Frank Delamere. By degrees his manner became calmer, and his mind more collected. His energies, too, returned, and with their return the desire to employ them.

"Mother," said he one morning, as the

usual party were collected at the breakfast-table, "I have been idle too long. You counselled me, and wisely, to decide upon nothing till Delamere was sold, and I was able to judge accurately of my future prospects. I know them now. I am a beggar. I am worse than a beggar, for I owe a thousand pounds. But at least I know the extent of my misfortunes. I must now endeavour to repair them. I must select a profession, and I feel I should be happier were I engaged in it, for till I have employment, I cannot help reverting to that dreadful past."

"And what, Frank, would you wish to do?" said his mother.

"I should like to go into the army."

"Pooh, pooh!" said his uncle, "you are too old for it. You are now about three-and-twenty, and what chance would you have in competition with lads of sixteen? Besides, you have not a penny to buy yourself on, and then you could not live upon your pay. I can tell you that, for I have tried it."

"Well then," said Frank, as usual easily guided, "I must try something else. I was a double first at Oxford. I think I might do something at the bar."

"What, be a chap in a black gown and a powdered wig?" said Uncle John, with great indignation, "pooh, pooh! that's a still worse trade than the other."

"My dear Sir," said Mrs. Delamere, soothingly, "the bar is a gentlemanly profession."

"That is precisely why I object to it."

"Uncle John!"

"Yes. A gentlemanly profession is a profession that a man starves by, and its gentlemanly character is the sum total that the poor devil of a practitioner gets as an equivalent for his starvation."

"But, my dear Sir, Frank has great talents."

"Pshaw! Everybody who goes to the bar is said to have great talents. But tell me this, Madame Delamere, what proportion of these devilish clever fellows live by their trade?"

"Upon my word, my good Sir, I could not say."

"Then I can. Adam Smith—"

"My dear uncle," said Frank, with astonishment, "have you read 'Adam Smith.'"

"Why the devil, Sir, should not I have read 'Adam Smith,' and all the other books that ever were printed or written," and Uncle John snorted with anger.

"My dear uncle," said his nephew, apologetically, "I thought that being with Jung Jow—"

"Well, Sir, it was just when I had done with Jung Jow that I did read him."

"It is perfectly imcomprehensible," said Frank.

"It is not at all incomprehensible," said his irate relative; "on the contrary, it is very easily understood. Did not I tell you I had lost all my money at Bombay?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Well, Sir, cannot you understand when I had not a pice in my pocket to stake at the

hazard-table, I was obliged to look for amusement somewhere else?"

"And so you read 'Adam Smith?'"

"Yes, Sir, I read 'Adam Smith.' I saw it on the book-shelves of one of those merchant chaps, and I borrowed it."

"A very strange book, allow me to say, Sir, for a man in your situation to select for amusement."

"I won't allow you to say anything of the sort. It is precisely the sort of book a man in my situation would have selected for his amusement."

Frank shook his head.

"What are you shaking your head for, Sir? What do they call the Scotch fellow's book?"

"'The Wealth of Nations,' Sir."

"Well, Sir, and was it not natural that I, who was as poor as Job, should think it likely that in a book on the wealth of nations, I should find some hints as to the best mode of getting wealth for individuals?"

Frank bowed as if vanquished.

"And what did you think of it, Sir?"

"Pooh, pooh! all theory. Evidently the work of a man who had never stirred out of his closet. Faith, if he had seen Gianotti hanging Jung Jow's tax-gatherers, he would have got a practical hint as to the best fashion of improving a royal revenue."

"My dear Sir," said Mrs. Delamere, "these are shocking ideas. You would not recommend the introduction of so dreadful a system into England?"

"Why not?" growled Uncle John, turning sharply round like a bear who, baited between two dogs, snaps at them alternately. "Why not, I say? The country has never gone on half so well since it threw off that dreadful system, as you call it. It is not a hundred years since the high officers of State were responsible for their acts with their heads."

"Oh, my dear Sir!"

"My dear fiddlestick! What made our

fleets in Chatham's time lick regularly those frog-eating chaps on the other side of the water?"

"The courage of our officers and seamen."

"All nonsense, Madam Delamere. It was having that fellow Byng out on the quarter-deck. 'The English shoot an Admiral from time to time to encourage the rest,' says somebody, and the fellow, whoever he was, was quite right. We did not lose a sea-fight for twenty years after."

"It may be true, my dear Sir," said Frank; "but what is your deduction?"

"What is my deduction! I would hang a Chancellor of the Exchequer every now and then, just by way of making those chaps on the Treasury Bench open their eyes a bit."

"Oh, my dear Sir!" said Mrs. Delamere, "this is shocking. But you have forgotten what you were going to tell us about Frank's going to the bar, and Adam Smith."

"Just this, Madam Delamere, that though the Scotch fellow is a fool, for once he chances to be right."

"And what does he say?"

"Why but this, that for twenty fellows who put those cauliflower-wigs on their heads, nineteen out of the twenty never make butter to their bread."

"Then you do not think that Frank should be a barrister?"

"I should not think that I acted kindly to any puppy, if I threw him into a mill-stream where the current ran so strong, that there were nineteen chances of his being drowned, to one of his coming out again."

"And you won't have the bar for Frank?"

"No, no, Madam Delamere. I won't hear of a profession, where, if the boy succeed, he will die of broken health; if he fail, he will die of a broken heart."

"And what would you have me be then, Uncle John?"

"A merchant."

"A merchant! I know nothing of the profession."

"Then learn it."

"But I should require to become a clerk."

"Then become a clerk."

"Oh, uncle!"

"What are you groaning at, Sir? what is it you want? Is it not a position in the world?"

"Yes."

"What is the foundation of that position? Is it not independence?"

"Yes."

"What is independence?"

"Not owing anybody a farthing."

"Something more than that. It is never receiving a champagne dinner unless you can afford to give a champagne dinner in return."

"But where is the necessity for my giving or taking champagne dinners?"

"Because you desire not merely existence

but success, and people who have succeeded in the world do both."

"I don't see your drift."

"It is simple enough. The power of giving champagne dinners is in the higher classes, the evidence of independence."

"True."

"But such a high class sort of independence needs lots of money."

"True again."

"That is the Q. E. D., as we should have said at Oxford. If you would be perfectly independant, and in the lofty position you aspire to, you require to have your pockets well lined."

"Well?"

"Well, money being the basis on which this brilliant future must eventually rest, you who desire to possess it, should select that profession which is likely to bring you in the most cash."

"And that is the reason you recommend me to be a merchant?"

"Exactly."

"Oh, uncle, I could not bear the drudgery of the desk."

"You must bear it."

"Why?"

"Because you owe a thousand pounds. You are not a free man."

"True, but how does that affect my future profession?"

"Materially. The best lawyer that ever wore a wig, never made for the first six years salt for his soup."

"It is too true."

"While you require a trade that will bring you a present income, and enable you to pay your interest-money of fifty pounds a year."

Frank was silent.

"You hesitate, boy. How can you hesitate. Your mother has it not to spare, and as for me, I can barely support myself, my monkeys, my cockatoo, and my rattlesnake."

"But, oh, uncle, the degradation of a Delamere, of Delamere, going into a counting-house."

"No degradation whatever in a man doing anything which enables him honestly to pay his debt and its interest. The real degradation would be in a Delamere, of Delamere, adopting, with his eyes open, a profession which prevented him from doing either."

There was a dead silence for some minutes. It was broken by Mrs. Delamere.

"Your uncle is right, my dear boy. Embarrassed as you are, honesty requires that you should engage in some employment which affords an immediate income. Yet you dislike so much a mercantile life, that I would willingly see you try something else. Your cousin Lacy is powerful with the ministry. Perhaps he may obtain a situation for you."

"Never, mother," said Frank, with earnestness. "Bad as a merchant's desk is, it

is better than that. They have neglected us ever since our ruin, and as far as I am concerned, I would rather starve and rot on a dung-hill than be indebted to them for a farthing."

"I admire your pluck, boy," said Uncle John, nodding approvingly, "I admire your pluck, for I think my right honourable sister, and her litter, thorough curs from one end of the kennel to the other. But we shall see. There is no hurry for a week or two; you can think over the matter, boy."

The subject was dropped, and ten days elapsed at Laurel Cottage without any decision being come to by Frank Delamere.

In the meantime, Uncle John's correspondence proceeded with its wonted energy, and letters arrived, and were answered by Jung Jow's Master of the Horse, without exciting in his relatives interest or observation At length, one morning at breakfast, the worthy

Captain, with one of his grim smiles upon his face, drew forth from his pocket several epistles.

"Frank," said he, "I have been doing my best for you, though perhaps you won't be over grateful for it. I have been writing to your cousin Lacy, to ask him to give you a lift."

"Oh, uncle! after you were so well acquainted with my feelings on the subject. How could you so compromise me?"

"Compromise you, devil a bit; you shall hear what I have said. Here is a copy o my letter."

With these words, Captain Delamere produced a sheet of paper, covered with scrawls, evidently intended to be corrections of the original text, from which he read as follows:

"Laurel Cottage, Manchester.

"Nephew George,

"Your cous is, the Delameres, have had

a sad come down in the world, and to say the truth, are devilish ill off. So am I. I see by the Red Book, that you have got yourself in for a good thing—fifteen hundred a-year, and as we are your nearest kin, I am sure it would be a pleasure to you to give us a lift. You may send me fifty pounds; if it should be a hundred, I wont object; and as to Frank, you might get him a consulship, or a secretaryship, or an ambassadorship, I don't mind which, so there be plenty of tin tacked to it.

"This is from myself, 'private and confidential,' as you chaps in Downing Street phrase it, and I give you my word of honour that Frank knows nothing of the application, and if he did, would not consent to it; for it was but yesterday he said he would not be indebted to you for a crust of bread. In short, my good fellow you are not held A 1 at Lloyd's, as the skipper scoundrel, who drowned my boa, would have said, and so you will now have a glorious opportunity

of showing, by your coming down handsomely, and doing something for us, that we have misjudged you,

"Yours ever,

"JOHN DELAMERE."

"That is what I call not compromising you, Frank," said the Captain, in triumph. "You see, I told the beggar exactly what you thought of him."

"And what said Mr. Lacy in reply?" asked Mrs. Delamere.

"Here is his production," said the Captain, "and a pretty one it is. I begin to think the chap is a Jesuit in disguise; but you shall judge for yourselves," and the friend of Jung Jow read as follows:

"Downing Street.

"My dearest uncle,

"It gave me inexpressible pain to learn of the humiliation and the poverty of the poor Delameres. Alas! how constantly, even

in this world, does misconduct bear its sad fruits. I should be most happy—truly delighted I may say, to contribute my small mite to add to their comfort and yours; but it pains me to write the word—it is impossible. I have, as you justly remarked fifteen hundred pounds a-year, but I hold a high position in the ministry, and my loyalty, and respect for my sovereign require me to support a certain equipage, and this, liberal as my salary may appear to you, I am barely able, even with the greatest economy, to accomplish.

"Besides, even were I more affluent, I should be obliged to refuse you as a matter of principle. I am, (I trust it does not savour of spiritual pride to say so,) sincerely religious. I believe that misfortunes in this world are the direct results of the agency of Providence. You and Frank have been unfortunate, and I feel that if I were to supply you with fresh funds, I should only be ministering to fresh misconduct.

I cannot, with my eyes open, promote vice; therefore, my dearest uncle, I need not say with what pain to myself, I must again refuse your request.

"Your most affectionate nephew,

"George Frederick Augustus Lacy."

"P. S.—All here unite in kindest wishes, and send their best love."

"There's a whelp for you," said the Captain, flinging the missive indignantly on the table. "So much for one's relations when one's in a pinch. Thank heaven! one's friends are made of better stuff. You must know, Frank, that when I was at Eton, some grocer in the city who wished to become aristocratic, sent his son to school there. They used to welt 'little molasses,' as they called him, for the fun of the thing, till at last I took the poor beggar's part, and served out half a dozen of them, till they let him alone. You have no conception how

grateful he felt. When I was in the Guards, he used to send me a wheelbarrow load of tamarind and Guava pots at the arrival of every West Indian fleet. Well, who should I meet in London the other day, but my old friend Symington. He knew me at once, was delighted to see me, and asked me to dinner. A famous house in Russell Square, first-rate port, great West India merchant, with half a dozen sugar estates. When I was coming away, he said if ever he could give me a lift, he should be most happy. So after I got that whelp's letter from Downing Street, I gave him a line or two, and here is the answer to it.

"George Yard, Fenchurch Street.

"My dear Sir,

"After the very flattering manner in which you spoke of your nephew's qualities—I say Frank," here the worthy Captain winked to Frank, "necessary bit of humbug you know. Where was I, aye? nephew's qualities—I immediately exerted myself to

procure him a situation. Mr. Staunton, the great Manchester manufacturer, is a friend of mine, and he has consented, on my recommendation, to receive your young relative into his counting-house. The salary will be one hundred and fifty pounds a year, but that is the least important part of the matter. The great advantage is, that there is no commercial firm in England, perhaps none in Europe, which offers to its young employés such a means of acquiring a thorough knowledge of the profession, or holds out such brilliant prospects for the future, in the event of their showing energy, talent, and industry. In the hope that this appointment may meet your wishes, and those of your relative. Believe me my dear Sir,

"Your's sincerely,

"Edward Symington."

"That is what I call a trump," said Uncle John. "Now there is a chance for you, Frank—one hundred and fifty pounds a

year, cash down. You will be able to pay your interest, and start fair with the world at once, and as an honest man."

Frank became deadly pale, but said nothing.

"What! do you hesitate, boy?" said Uncle John.

"Oh, uncle! it is not merely now a desk and a counting-house that I dislike. But to go to Mr. Staunton's! It would kill me, there are reasons—there are causes. My mother can guess at them, but you cannot."

"Yes, my dear boy," said Mrs. Delamere, with the tears in her eyes, "your uncle can guess at them as well as I, for I thought it my duty to tell him all. Why should I conceal it from one who, notwithstanding his roughness, loves you, I am sure, as if you were his own son."

Captain Delamere did not seem much to relsih the compliment, at least, he replied to it by saying, in a pettish tone:

"Well, Frank, what do you decide?"

Frank was silent for awhile, and the

changes, now pale, now crimson, which came over his countenance, showed the intensity of his agitation. At length he looked towards Mrs. Delamere. His mother's eyes were fixed on him with an earnest and anxious glance. Frank translated well its import, and it decided him.

"Yes, my dear mother," said he, "your look tells me what I ought to do. I will, for the first time in my life, exhibit self-denial. I will go to Mr. Staunton's, though I would rather have gone to my grave."

"Hurrah!" cried Uncle John, pulling off his turban in his enthusiasm, and flinging it into in the air, in its descent from which it was caught by one of the girandoles on the chimney-piece. "The boy will turn out a dog of the true breed after all. I thought he was like to prove nothing but a cur."

And that afternoon a letter was despatched to Mr. Symington, to announce that the heir of the Delameres would gratefully accept a seat in the office of Mr. Staunton, the Cotton Spinner.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VALUE OF CLASSICS TO A BEGGAR.

"The languages, especially the dead,
The sciences, and most of all, the abstruse,
The arts, at least all such as could be said
To be the most remote from common use.
In all these he was much and deeply read."

BYRON.

At length the eventful day arrived which was to witness Frank's commencement of his new occupation, and the small party assembled round the breakfast table at Laurel Cottage, ate their rolls, and drank their tea without uttering a syllable.

In Mrs. Delamere, anxiety with regard to the success of her son, in the new profession in which he was about to embark,

naturally accounted for her silence. Frank too, had his fears, and his hopes—occasionally intermingled with dreams of the future, which were hardly confessed even to himself, and which, little clearly developed as they might be, were not from their indistinctness the less cherished. Still, paint them as he might, there was little brilliancy in their colouring, and his countenance like that of his mother, by its anxious and melancholy expression, bore evidence to the feelings which agitated him.

Captain Delamere also had adopted the taciturn mood. But unlike those of his companions, his private meditations were tinged neither with anxiety nor sorrow, for as he held busy communion with himself, he nodded, shook his head, tossed his nose in the air, and accompanied all this pantomime by a smile of as much self-gratulation as distinguished the countenance of Malvolio on the eventful morning, when he calculated the effect to be produced on his mistress's heart, by his yellow stockings and cross garters.

At length the meal came to a conclusion, and with its close the hour at which Frank was to proceed to Mr. Staunton's counting-house. Through the medium of his uncle, he had been instructed by Mr. Symington of the day on which his new employer would expect him, and had been furnished with a letter of introduction. With this in his pocket, the heir of the Delameres, glad to escape from home, and with a bursting heart, having caught up his hat, kissed his mother, and shaken hands with Jung Jow's Master of the Horse, hurried forth to the road. His two relatives followed him to the gate. In the old lady's eyes there was something like a tear. Uncle John's countenance on the contrary was positively radiant with joy. While Mrs. Delamere was in his neighbourhood, he constrained himself, but as soon as she had returned to the house, he gave vent to his raptures.

"Nicked the Cotton Spinner, by Jove," said he, as he slapped his thigh. "Frank is

as handsome a young dog as ever stood in shoe leather; and if he does not carry off the daughter of that cent per cent old sinner, my name is not John Delamere. 'Twould serve him right! A spinning-jenny fellow, and who is as little like a gentleman as my blue-rumped baboon, to have the insolence to think of buying Delamere Court. I would give all that I am worth, and would even throw the monkeys and the rattle-snake into the bargain to see them fairly started for Gretna. Oh! Mr. James Staunton, Mr. James Staunton! you fancy yourself very wide awake; but you never would have committed the blunder of allowing an enemy to take up his quarters in your camp, if you had served for twenty years under Jung Jow Cheribow."

We will leave the worthy Captain to conclude at his leisure his congratulatory observations, and follow Frank Delamere. Half an hour's walk brought him to the counting-house of Willis and Staunton. The

extensive building, the numberless windows, the many people going to and fro, the bustle, all proclaimed the importance of the establishment. The visitor passed through two or three rooms filled with clerks. One of these intimated his presence to the head of the firm. Frank was not kept waiting, and was ushered into a private apartment, where, seated alone, was the object of his search.

One and twenty years had passed since his marriage, and they had not improved the appearance of Mr. James Staunton. Good living, ease, and the obesity consequent upon his period of life, had contributed to swell out face and person. The features had become bloated, the neck apparently shorter, the stomach paunchy. He looked apoplectic, and smelt of port wine. Much attached to his wife, he had never left off mourning since her death; and now appeared in his ordinary garb, viz., a black dress coat, not particularly well-made; a black cloth waistcoat, extravagantly long, and somewhat spotted

with grease-drops in front; breeches of the same material, buttoning at the knees and fastened with strings; and, furthermore, ornamented with a heavy gold watch chain, terminating in a massive key and two enormous seals. Silk stockings, and short black cloth gaiters, with well polished shoes, completed the costume of the lower man. Around his throat were three white neck-cloths, one over the other; each drawn as tight as if it had been his intention to strangle himself; while a fourth of virgin purity formed the exterior tegument, and was tied with a small bow. His hair was carefully powdered, and terminated behind in a queue. Such were his in-door habiliments. When he went forth, he added to them a low-crowned hat, with a broad brim, a gold-headed cane of bamboo, and an upper garment of black cloth, which was denominated a spencer, and which, in shape somewhat like a modern stable jacket, came a little below the loins. A pair of gold

spectacles were on his nose, though, from the glance of the clear grey eye that looked over them, one would never have discovered that the sight had lost anything of its power. The dress was not picturesque, and Mr. James Staunton, though scarce as ugly as Uncle John's blue-rumped baboon, was certainly not an Antinous. He himself, however, was indifferent to, or ignorant of, his want of personal charms. His whole look and manner intimated a consciousness of importance, and announced to the spectator evidently enough, that whatever he might be elsewhere, in the manufacturing world at least, he was a mighty man in Israel.

His reception of the new comer, though patronising, was still polite.

"So you are the young gentleman spoken of by Mr. Symington. How do you do, Mr. Delamere? Who would ever have thought that the day would come when a Delamere of Delamere Court would be glad to have

a stool in the office of James Staunton. Ay, ay, pride must have a fall—an old proverb, you know. Well, don't vex yourself about it. I was once as poor as you are; and if you attend to the £. s. d., you may, some day or other, make money enough to buy an estate again. I intended to have bought Delamere Court myself, but some fellow stole a march upon me. Who bought it? Ah! you don't know; well now, that's odd; but a warm man, no doubt, and close as wax, that's clear enough. But come, I will introduce you to Mr. Malton, the head clerk. He will inform you what you are to do. You write a good hand, they tell me. Ay, so much the better. The rest will come in time, so now let us to the office."

He left the room as he spoke. Frank followed him, was introduced to the viceroy of the manufacturer, and commenced his new career.

It cannot be denied that it was sadly against the grain. Classical information is

like novel reading — it furnishes rather the agreeable than the useful. It supplies the student with history, with anecdote, with memoir, with poetry and the drama—it teaches him to appreciate the beautiful in art and nature—it familiarizes him with descriptions of castles, and palaces, and temples, the cool portico, the long colonnade—it holds up to his admiration heroic deeds, and paints with voluptuousness, but with the truthfulness of reality, the beauties of blooming nymphs and shady trees, and sparkling waters—it connects everything that is most graceful with everything that is most wise; and while it details the eloquence of Cicero and Pericles, the half-Christianity of Socrates, or the philosophy of Aristotle or Plato, it associates them in the mind with the magnificent recollections of the Forum and the Capitol, or the less severe beauties of the Groves of Academe. All this, though admirable as a system of education for the man of taste, the orator, the

aristocrat—the happy few, who, born to the possession of superabundant wealth, can pass life in endeavours to add to its charms, is worse than useless for the many who are compelled to provide by labour for life's necessities. Yet of these last is formed the mass of the community; and the talent which may suffice for gilding the Acanthus, leaf is but a sorry means of subsistence for him, who, ere he reaches the capital of the pillar, is forced to hew out its shaft, and fix firmly its base.

The truth of all this was bitterly felt by poor Frank Delamere. For the first time in his life he was obliged to exercise self-denial, and the novelty of the employment did not tend to make it more agreeable. Frank did not shrink from the task. He had not only first-rate talents, but he had strong affections. His attachment to his mother was the paramount feeling of his existence, even stronger than his love for Mary Staunton. It is possible that such a heresy may make him suffer in the estima-

tion of my fair readers; but we must paint him as he was; and he knew well how deeply she would feel any failure in his new career. He therefore plodded on. Day by day made his task more easy; and at length he was enabled to conquer that, which we have ever found one of the most difficult problems, of which the solution is expected from humanity:—he was able to tell the debit from the credit side of the ledger.

In fact, as far as education went, it would have been difficult for Frank to have adopted any system better calculated for the development of his mental powers. Three years in a counting-house will do more for a man's mind, as far as the practical business of life goes, than an acquaintance with the *omne scibile* of all the Universities of Christendom. The daily and hourly habit of punctuality—the necessity of reading letters when they arrive, and of answering them when read—the power of summing up long columns of

accounts, and enunciating the result with the accuracy of a farthing—the custom of doing every transaction through the medium of pen, ink, and paper, and the concomitant necessity of meditating carefully and long upon the consequences before you bind yourself to an irrevocable act—the learning the valuable lesson of attaching weight to small gains or small losses—the familiarity with the produce of every part of the earth, its quality, its quantity, its price—the knowledge of how far the governments of these countries affect their production or consumption, the industry of their people or its happiness—the intimacy with the size and tonnage of shipping, or the expense of their component parts, the wood, the iron, the copper, the rope, the canvass—the acquaintance with the average capabilities, the efficiency or ignorance of the masters and crew—the geography, the climate, the healthfulness and product of the countries they traded to—the excellence or badness

of their harbours—the general character of their freights, their power of consuming British goods, or of conveying to and fro by their own means, or through the medium of others, the product of the foreign or home market—all this is the result of well-employed counting-house education; and all this, independently of its absolute necessity in the mercantile profession, is eminently valuable to nineteen-twentieths of the community in the management of their own affairs. So immense a mass of information is an important item in the aggregate of human acquirements; but what is far more valuable, is the habit which a seat at a merchant's desk bestows of minute accuracy in the application of it. Sam Slick was not far wrong when he said, that the three things necessary for success in life were cyphering—cyphering—cyphering.

Thus nearly two years of Frank's existence slipped away; and strange to say, after the first pang of wounded vanity had

ceased to be felt, they were passed happily. The consciousness that he was gratifying his mother by his steady application to what with his tastes was ungrateful labour, —aided much to produce this feeling; but it must not be concealed that something of this pleasure was connected with Mary Staunton.

He had never forgotten the conversations at the Hermitage, and the almost contemptuous fashion in which his fair companion had spoken of his overweaning family pride, of his indolence, of his deficiency in determination, of his want of a fixed and worthy object; and he felt his heart beat and his cheek glow at the thought that his present perseverance would prove to her that she had judged him unworthily.

That she was aware of that perseverance he could not doubt. Mr. Staunton had not anticipated such close attention in his new clerk. He had taken him into his office in gratification of a feeling which he hardly

confessed to himself—that of having in his service a representative of the great Delameres of Delamere; and he looked upon the hundred and fifty pounds a-year salary rather as a magnificent charity, than a sum for which he was to receive compensation from the labour of his *employé*.

But James Staunton, with all his purse-pride and strong prejudices, was just; and when, month after month, his young *protégé* was found punctually at his desk every morning at the prescribed hour, when he learned that he asked for no holidays, and never joined in the tippling debaucheries, which occasionally produced absence in the other denizens of the counting-house, he began to respect the man who possessed the only qualities which the head of the firm thought worth respecting, because they were those by which he had risen himself—honesty and industry.

Besides, Frank had become useful to an extent which neither his employer nor him-

self had anticipated. The clerk who had charge of the foreign correspondence died. In 1804, an acquaintance with the continental languages was extremely rare. The very Secretaries of State could hardly speak a sentence of intelligible French, and the middle classes were, of course, profoundly ignorant of it. To supply, therefore, the place of the deceased official, was a matter of some difficulty. And yet he had been the most important person in the establishment, for James Staunton, in defiance of Buonaparte's edicts, found his best market on the continent, and was engaged heart and soul in deluging Northern Germany with his goods through the medium of Heligoland, and the smugglers of Hamburgh and the Elbe.

The death of the foreign correspondent affected materially this traffic. To resign it entirely, or even to submit to its limitation, was to entail enormous loss on the establishment. Yet how to carry it on was a

problem. The great Cotton Spinner himself knew nothing of the language. French refugees were, no doubt, numerous enough. But the office required secrecy and confidence, and there was peril in entrusting interests so important to a stranger. James Staunton was puzzled. He thrust his hands into his breeches pockets a hundred times a-day, and as he paced up and down his room, closed and unclosed them perpetually. Some philosopher, to be sure, has defined life to be nothing but a series of buttonings and unbuttonings, but the man in the black small clothes cared nothing about philosophy; and speedily came to the conclusion that existence spent in such a manner—though the wise men of the earth might prove its necessity—was not either lucrative or agreeable.

In the midst of his distresses, he met with aid from a quarter of which he had never dreamed. Frank, some months before, had chanced to mention in the office his intimate acquaintance with the French language.

The heir of the Delameres was popular. He was well-born, and the English in their hearts adore feudality. He had been unfortunate and was pitied—he was unassuming in his manners—willing to oblige, and upon many occasions had taken extra labour in the counting-house to enable his idler or gayer associates to absent themselves from the desk. All this produced him good will, and two or three grateful friends mentioned his accomplishments to the head of the firm.

James Staunton caught eagerly at the chance thus afforded him of renewing his lucrative connexion with Heligoland. He questioned Frank on the subject, and was, to a certain extent, assured by his answers. But it was necessary to test his knowledge. He dictated a long letter on indifferent matters, made the young linguist turn it into French, and with the original document and the copy in his pocket, hurried off by that night's mail to London.

Lord Torrisdale had been an ambassador, and was, of course, *au fait* in a language in which the communications of all European embassies are written. To him the double missive was submitted, and the old peer pronounced the translation faithful, idiomatic, and elegant. The manufacturer was satisfied. The following day saw him once more on his return to Manchester, and before the week was over, Frank Delamere was advanced to the office of principal foreign correspondent, and with a salary which, with its increase, amounted to three hundred a-year.

Thus, about two years after he entered the office, an agreeable change took place in his circumstances, and Frank, at last, began to consider himself as the favourite of fortune. He ought to have remembered that the goddess is a fickle one.

But we anticipate. We must now turn our attention to Staunton Lodge and the doings of its inmates.

CHAPTER XV.

FRANK AND MARY MEET AGAIN.

"What ere the cause might be they had become
Changed; for the dame grew distant and the youth shy,
Their looks cast down, their greetings almost dumb,
And much embarrassment in either eye."

BYRON.

About a fortnight after Frank's elevation to the chair of Foreign Correspondent, Mr. Staunton was seated at breakfast at Staunton Lodge.

It was a large square ugly building in the style of Mr. Arkinson's, about five miles from Manchester, and surrounded by park-like grounds some fifty acres in extent. The gardens were extensive and well kept,

and a magnificent conservatory adjoined the drawing-room, for the young heiress was passionately fond of flowers; and James Staunton, keen and grasping in his commercial transactions, appeared to have left his avarice in the counting-house, and in his home was a liberal master and a doating father.

The old gentleman was not alone. Two ladies were also at the breakfast table. One was Mary. The other was Lady Margaret Seton, the daughter of the Earl of Torrisdale, the old noble who had been uncle to Mrs. Staunton. Lady Margaret and Mary were thus second cousins.

The London season was just over, and the young heiress had a few days before returned from the capital to her paternal roof, accompanied by her fair relative, well pleased to spend anywhere rather than at home, that to the high-born the most monotonous six weeks in the year, the period which intervenes between the last drawing-

room at St. James's, and the commencement of the shooting season.

"Well, young ladies," said Mr. Staunton, "we are about to have a visitor to-day."

"Ah, my dear Sir," said Lady Margaret, "that is delightful! for to tell you the truth, I think Staunton Lodge somewhat dull. But if you wish us to be supremely interested, you must tell us whether it is to be a lady or a gentleman."

"A gentleman, Lady Margaret."

"So far so good. Now for his age. Old or young?"

"Young, of course."

"Better and better! Gentlemanly, I hope?"

"Very!"

"Excellent. Good-looking, I trust."

"Why, I suppose so. At least, I used to hear that the girls were always running after him."

"My dear Sir, you should not say any thing so positively shocking! You ought to know that young ladies never run after

anybody. But I will pardon your offence on one condition—you must tell me: is he well born?"

"He has a genealogy as long as your own, Lady Margaret. It goes at least up to the Flood."

"Delightful! Now for his rent-roll. Is he rich?"

"Upon my life, Lady Margaret, it does one good to see a young lady take such a rational business-like view of the subject. I agree with you; I think no girl has a right to fall in love with a young man till she has looked into the credit and debit sides of his ledger."

Lady Margaret coloured as if she did not consider Mr. Staunton's remark altogether as a compliment.

Mary saw her friend's embarrassment, and good humouredly came to her relief.

"And what, dear papa, may be the credit side of our visitor's?"

"Why, Mary, a month ago, it was exactly one hundred and fifty pounds a-year."

"Dreadful!" said Lady Margaret. "It would scarce have paid my yearly bill for the dresses which I smuggle over from Madame Victorine's. But how do you know? for it is too dreadful to believe that handsome young men can be so very poor."

"How do I know?" said old Staunton, looking over the tops of his spectacles at his fair guests with something like malice. "Why, because I pay his salary. The lad is one of my clerks."

Lady Margaret tossed her head in the air in a manner, almost violent enough to have separated the fair appendage from the shoulders which supported it.

Mary burst out laughing.

"Ah! I can guess who it is. It is Mr. Johnstone, or Mr. Tompson, or Mr. Smith. All the very Hamlets of Manchester, Margaret, the glasses of fashion and the moulds

of form. So, my dear girl, take care of your heart."

"Take care of yours, Mary," said her father, "for it is not one of your old friends. It is Mr. Delamere."

The answer at once checked Mary's gaiety, and she became suddenly silent. In fact, the young heiress of Staunton Lodge was more interested in the reply than she chose to avow, even to herself. She had refused Frank Delamere, and she had not regretted the refusal. Mary was determined to respect her husband, and to enable her to do so, she felt that it was necessary that he should possess steadiness of purpose and energy of will; the talent which would entitle him to undertake great enterprises, and the determination which would bring them to a successful issue. These were virtues in which Frank was deficient, and she had rejected him. But while she did so, she could not help avowing to herself, that he had a thousand qualities which fitted him to be a

most agreeable companion. His accomplished mind, his varied knowledge, his powers of language, his fund of anecdote, his gentlemanly manners, his very handsome person—for with all her philosophy Mary was a woman—all had had the effect of fixing him in her memory, and she had thought of her rides to Fitzallan Castle, and her saunterings in the grounds of the Hermitage more frequently than was consistent with the indifference which she expressed and affected. It may be well understood, then, that the announcement by her father of Mr. Delamere's approaching visit, was not received with the same apathy which would have attended the expected arrival of Mr. Johnstone, Mr. Tompson, or Mr. Smith. In spite of herself, she crimsoned to the very tips of her ears. Mary could have cried with vexation as she felt the conscious blood colouring her cheeks, and to conceal her emotion, she devoted herself to her dry toast and butter with an affected hunger,

which would have done honour to a charity boy.

"Why, bless my soul," said old Staunton, as he remarked the sudden silence produced by his announcement, "what is the matter with you girls? The arrival of this poor lad seems to have put you both in as great a pucker, as I used to do the good folks in Northumberland on a Christmas eve, when I frightened them out of their seven senses, by showing myself at the corner of a lane with a white sheet and a turnip lantern. Why, Lady Margaret, what is the matter with you?"

His fair guest bowed with great haughtiness.

"Matter with me, Mr. Staunton? Positively nothing. You cannot suppose that the arrival of this Mr. Delamere, or his absence, can be to me anything but a subject of indifference."

"Likely enough; yet I hope you, Mary, will be civil to the young man, for you know that he has seen better days. And it is pos-

sible that you both may have met him in London."

"I!" said Lady Margaret, with a toss of the head. "Never. Have you, Mary?"

"I met him," said her cousin, with well acted indifference, "at Lady Carpenter's."

"True, true," said the father. "I recollect there was some connection between the families. So I beg of you to be civil to him, for he is a good lad, and a hard-working, and writes French, Lady Margaret, as your father, Lord Torrisdale, tells me, as well as that foreign chap, Talleyrand, who, the papers say, is Boney's right-hand man."

The subject was dropped. Mr. Staunton went off to his office, and though the young ladies were together during the whole forenoon, no further allusion was made to the expected guest. The one was too indifferent, the other it might be too interested, to renew it.

The dinner hour came, and with it Mr. Staunton and his *protégé*. Frank was con-

ducted to his room, and made his toilet with an anxiety which he could not disguise from himself. He had not met Miss Staunton since the eventful parting at the Hermitage. He was then high in position, and the favourite of fortune; now he was a beggar, almost dependent on her father's charity. The contrast was too great to be borne with philosophy, and two or three times he flung himself into the chair, by his bed-side, from want of nerve to make his way to the drawing-room.

"This is idle," said he at length; "I would fain have spared myself this pain, but I must drink the cup that I have brewed for myself. To have refused the invitation might have given offence to Mr. Staunton, and it may be, entailed the loss of my situation, and what a misery that would have been for my mother. No. My first duty is to her, and I must ensure her happiness at any cost. As for Miss Staunton"—and poor Frank gasped and was silent. "There is now,"

said he, after a while, "a gulf between her and me. If I am poor, I am also proud—as proud as she is; and now that I am no longer her equal, she shall never see in my manner or my language ought but the distant respect which is due from an *employé* of Mr. Staunton to his daughter."

With the words Frank made an effort, and found his way to the drawing-room.

It was occupied only by the old gentleman, who seemed in that usual state of fuss and fidget in which worthy men, not unfrequently indulge when kept waiting for their dinner. His watch was in his hand, and as Frank entered he was pacing about the room, consulting it frequently, and employing the intervals between the consultations, in spinning the chain, with the two heavy seals attached to it, round his forefinger.

"You are late, Mr. Delamere," said he. "All the world is late. But when young men and young women take to dressing themselves, they seem to forget that there is

such a thing as cooks being kept waiting, or dishes getting cold," and the hungry Amphitryon paced backwards and forwards, and twirled the watch-chain with redoubled energy.

At length, after dinner had been announced, and two separate messengers sent to inform the fair loiterers that all was waiting for them, the truants made their appearance, arm-in-arm.

"Late, Mary, late!" said her father. "A quarter after the hour at least. But come—Lady Margaret Seton, Mr. Delamere—Mr. Delamere, my daughter; but now I think of it, you have met before. Come, Lady Margaret," and the old gentleman walked off with his guest.

In the meantime Frank and Mary had renewed their acquaintance. Mary's courtesy was grave, but it was accompanied by a flushed cheek and a faint smile. Frank was as pale as death, and his bow distant, almost haughty. He offered her his arm, and the disciples of "the present and past" followed the master of the house to the dining-room.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARY JEALOUS.

"*Ros.* I am your Rosalind.
Cel. He hath a Rosalind of a better leer than you.
Ros. Come, woo me, woo me; for now I am in a holiday humour and like enough to consent."

AS YOU LIKE IT.

THE dinner was magnificent; for though James Staunton was niggardly to the extent of farthings, he not unfrequently flung away thousands without regret. And the present was one of the occasions on which he indulged in extravagance, for he loved good eating, and spared no expense in the gratification of his palate. But though the viands were excellent, and the wines the best which the London Docks could produce, the banquet

proceeded coldly. The embarrassment of Mary and Frank naturally condemned both to silence, or, if forced to speak from the necessity of answering the questions of others, limited their replies to the fewest possible words necessary to express their meaning. Their taciturn mood imperceptibly affected the spirits of their two companions. The meal was hurried over, and the two ladies, shortly after the fruit was put upon the table, retired to the drawing-room.

It was long ere the gentlemen followed them. The period was one in which the male sex in England indulged to a great extent in the pleasures of the table, and to be "a five bottle man," was to possess a character which inspired rather respect than indignation. James Staunton was no debauchee; but he entertained as devout a horror as Falstaff for "thin potations;" and though he did not addict himself to Sack, he did so to Port wine. Two bottles

a day were his regular allowance; a quantity which, though at the present hour it may excite astonishment in the spectator, and illness in the recipient, produced upon his iron frame no more effect than water.

His young companion did not imitate him. It was in vain that the master of the house, who acted on the principle of leaving at the office, the rules of the office, pressed upon him the liquor. Frank pleaded headache, and confined himself to a very moderate allowance of sherry. Anxious, however, to delay as long as possible his appearance in the drawing-room, he engaged his principal in a prolonged conversation upon the best mode of introducing English goods into the continent, in spite of the opposition of the First Consul. Entering heart and soul into the matter, his active mind, his thorough geographical knowledge, and more especially his personal acquaintance with the country, enabled him to suggest many new ideas upon the subject; and tea had been thrice an-

nounced, ere his host and himself could abandon so interesting a discussion, and obey the summons.

They were warmly received. Lady Margaret had been much struck during dinner with the very handsome person, and high-bred manners of her *vis-à-vis*, and the few observations which he had uttered had rivetted her attention. No sooner, therefore, had she, on their withdrawal from the dinner-table, secured a *tête-à-tête* with her cousin, than she plied Mary with a thousand questions with regard to their new guest. Bit by bit his history was extracted, though most unwillingly; but ladies, when a young man, and a handsome one, is concerned, have wonderful perseverance, and at length she had before her his birth, parentage, and education. He was a son of General Delamere's—he was that "first-rate fellow Delamere," whose career at Oxford had been the envy of her brothers—he was Mr. Delamere, of Delamere Court, whose glories were fami-

liar to her ear as one of the four-in-hand club, and a man about town; but most especially did he find favour in her eyes because he was a cousin of the Marquis of Hazleton. Lady Margaret had decided in her own mind, that she was to be the future Duchess of Acton; and as young ladies, notwithstanding their angelic natures, condescend when matrimony is in the case, to employ very terrestrial means for the furtherance of their objects, she had determined on playing the agreeable to Mr. Delamere, in the private hope that the amiability and the charming qualities of Lady Margaret Seton might be duly reported by Frank to his noble relative. It was, therefore, with a burst of affected indignation that she assailed on their entry her host and his *protégé*.

"Upon my word," said she, affecting to address the master of the house; though her eyes directed towards his companion, intimated more accurately the party for whom the reproach was intended; "I

am quite ashamed of you. Here have been two young ladies for the last three hours expecting anxiously your appearance."

"And how could I, fair lady," said Mr. Staunton gaily, "guess that either of you ever wished to see us again. I am sure, that during dinner Mary and you were as silent as mumchance."

"Ah!" said the conscious damsel, colouring deeply, and anxious to free herself from a charge which she felt was well deserved. "You are positively cruel, Mr. Staunton, to parade so prominently my little weakness for an oyster-patty. But you might have known we were dying to see you, for were you not told three times that tea was ready?"

"Well; what has that to do with the matter?"

"Oh, you shocking man! Don't you know, that when ladies send to gentlemen to say that tea was ready, it is as much as to say that they are tired of each other's company. Judge then of the intensity of

our *ennui*, when we were obliged to reiterate the message three different times. Positively, unless you make yourself for the rest of the evening excessively agreeable, I shall never forgive you." And again a glance of the bright eyes intimated to Frank from which of the parties the interesting conversa- was expected.

It was fortunate indeed that the lady had not placed much dependance upon the colloquial eloquence of her Amphitryon, for the two bottles of port and the good things which had preceded them, produced their usual effect, and Mr. James Staunton, sinking into one of the arm-chairs by the side of the fire, gave in a few moments audible intimation that he had betaken himself to the land of dreams.

The young lady was scarcely more fortunate with the remaining cavalier. Frank was grave and silent, and except that he answered with formal politeness the observations that were put to him, he gave by his

manner no intimation that he was either conscious of the attentions of Lady Margaret, or was flattered by them.

His shyness did him no injury with either of his fair companions. Women like conquering a difficulty; and to most of them there is no charm in the other sex equal to the charm of indifference.

"He is proud," said Lady Margaret. "Well, I don't like him the worse for that. He is determined not to be civil to me. Well, I am determined that he shall." And with the thought, his fair antagonist renewed her attacks with a vivacity and perseverance, which appeared to intimate that she had for the moment forgotten her intentions upon the strawberry leaves, and the peace of Lord Hazleton.

Mary's feelings, too, had undergone a revolution. Women ever admire most what others admire, and estimate the male sex, not so much by what they think of them themselves, as by what is thought of

them by their fellows. Lady Margaret had a high position in the world. Young, beautiful, and admired, her suffrage was allowed to go far in conferring distinction; and the undisguised admiration which she evidently felt for Frank Delamere, had the effect of raising him in the opinion of his hostess. Yet the emotions produced by the phantasy, which the daughter of Lord Torrisdale had conceived for Mr. Delamere were not altogether pleasurable. It would be wrong to say that Mary felt jealous. She had no intention either of loving Frank, or marrying him. But at the same time it was very disagreeable, and in her own house too, to be thrown so entirely into the shade.

"I must speak to him," said Miss Staunton to herself. "It is evident, from the gravity of his manner, and the distance he affects, that he is conscious of his present position and mine. There is nothing, therefore, to apprehend of the renewal of his addresses. Besides, he is my father's guest,

and he is poor; and I must not allow him to think I am under the influence of that paltriest of all pride—the pride of wealth."

So Mary addressed Frank Delamere.

It was the first time she had addressed him since his arrival, and to confess the truth, she was disappointed in the result of the courtesy. Mary was not vain, and, as she assured herself twenty times an hour, perfectly indifferent. But still she had expected, it was natural that she should expect something like excitement in her guest—some quivering of the eyelid—some colouring of the cheek—something in short that showed, that her address to him, or her neighbourhood, produced pleasure or emotion.

Alas! there was nothing of the sort, Frank remained grave and self-possessed, or if there were any difference in his manner, it was evidenced by his listening with greater attention to the vivacity of Lady Margaret.

This was intolerable. Mary was the best of human beings; but she was a woman, not

an angel. If she had been, she would have been too perfect, to have been the object of human sympathies. So she indulged herself in making a few bitter remarks, rather spoken at than addressed to, her fair cousin; but finding that they were neither noticed nor responded to, she betook herself to the piano.

It will be recollected that Miss Staunton played and sung beautifully. They were accomplishments in which she had few equals, and moreover in which she was infinitely superior to Lady Margaret. Mary was conscious of this, and indeed if there were any weakness in her nature—and who is without them?—it was a pride in her powers as a musician. Poor Frank, it will be recollected, first got into her bad graces by neglecting to ask her to play and sing at Lady Carpenter's, and now, without being asked, she was about to give him a specimen of her talent for both. If any one were to allege that it was an insidious manœuvre to

wean her father's guest from the syren looks and fascinations of Lady Margaret, it would probably have been scandal; but whatever was the cause, Mary went to the piano.

If diplomacy were intended, it was unsuccessful. The music of Cimarosa was executed in the most brilliant manner, but awoke no remark. The "Oh Pescator del onda," rose and fell upon the ear as melodious as from the lips of Catalani, but if it had been uttered in the midst of Salisbury Plain, to judge from appearances, it could not have been less listened to. Lady Margaret had at length succeeded in arousing Frank Delamere, and the two were standing by the table in the centre of the room, on which was opened a folio volume of engravings. The gentleman was speaking seemingly with great eloquence, and the lady by his side had her eyes fixed upon his face, and hung upon his words with an attention which could not have been more devout had she been a

young artist receiving the inspirations of Sir Joshua.

The sight was not soothing to Mary.

"It is too bad of Margaret," said she to herself. "Her vanity is insatiable. She is never happy except when she is trying to make every man in love with her. And here is poor Mr. Delamere, who is quite unconscious of her fickle nature, falling headlong into her snares. I must not suffer this. I must not permit his feelings to be made the sport of a proverbial flirt. Besides, he is the guest of my father, and my father is answerable that, beneath this roof, he does not form acquaintances which may wreck his future happiness. My father cannot unfortunately see these things, but I, his daughter, am his representative, and must act for him. I should never forgive myself, if I permitted my cousin's folly to bring evil upon one who is entitled to our protection. I must put a stop to these silly flirtations."

And fully persuaded that she was actuated

by the most disinterested feelings of human nature, Mary approached her faithless cousin and her companion—a poor, weak, silly, misguided young man, who had a thousand follies, and who more especially had two sins of a deeper dye than any—who cared nothing for Cimarosa, and listened to the "Oh Pescator" with indifference.

CHAPTER XVII.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH WOMEN.

"They manage these things better in France."

STERNE.

Frank Delamere possessed an advantage at that time common to few. During the short peace of 1801, he had made a twelve months' tour on the continent, and had been fortunate enough to have quitted the French territory before the commencement of hostilities, and the promulgation of the celebrated decree which condemned so many of his fellow-countrymen and countrywomen, to what was in fact, though not in name, a foreign prison.

Frank had made good use of his time.

He was young and active, and was able to endure without exhaustion that greatest of all fatigues, travelling in a diligence. During his rapid tour, he had seen France and Belgium, the Rhine, and more especially the north of Germany. But he had done more, he had made the personal acquaintance of many of the celebrities whose names were then to Europe as household words.

Amongst other localities to which his curiosity had led him was of course Paris. His grandfather's old friend, the Count Laval had taken advantage of the permission given to the emigrants to return to their homes, and was once more a denizen, though with diminished means, of the Quartier Saint Germain. It is hardly necessary to say that he was delighted to see his quondam pupil and young friend, and through his influence, the drawing-rooms of both sides of the river, the Bourbon and the Bonapartist, were open to the heir of Delamere Court. The handsome young Englishman was

warmly welcomed by his Parisian hosts. He was almost the only one of his countrymen who could speak their language with fluency and grace, and the rarity of the accomplishment secured to its possessor a popularity which was denied to more distinguished guests.

Thus Frank had at command a mass of information on a thousand topics with which his countrymen were totally unacquainted, and Lady Margaret, sated with the ten times exhausted subjects of the London world, listened eagerly, and with unconcealed pleasure to narratives of men, and women, and localities which were then known to her only through the medium of newspapers or books, or through the didactic oratory of her ambassadorial papa. These had been the subjects of the conversation which had aroused the jealousy of Mary, and her irritation was not diminished by finding that her approach, though observed by both parties, was apparently little welcomed by

either. In fact, her presence seemed to freeze Frank's eloquence in its hitherto fluent course, and the speaker stammered, stopped, and then suddenly became silent.

Lady Margaret was not aware of the cause of her companion's embarrassment, for she knew nothing, and suspected nothing of the eventful *téte-à-téte* at the Hermitage ; but she could not help seeing that Frank was embarrassed by Mary's presence. She accounted, however, for it satisfactorily to herself by coming to the conclusion, that it was in consequence of the awe inspired in a clerk of Mr. Staunton's by Mr. Staunton's daughter. But whatever might be the reason, she felt that the anecdotes from which she had been deriving so much amusement had been arrested in their course, and she determined if possible to get quit of the intruder.

" My dear Mary," said she, in the blandest possible tone, and an expression of intense affection, " why have you left the piano.

Mr. Delamere and I were listening to the music with so much pleasure."

The appeal was unsuccessful. Women understand each other well, and Mary replied quietly, but in a tone in which might be recognised something of sarcasm.

"Your attention, my love, was somewhat of the noisiest; but of course I should be happy to continue my music, if it gave pleasure either to you or to Mr. Delamere. I shall play the air over again, but I have positively forgotten what it was. Do you remember?"

The conscious couple were silent. The sounds indeed were in their ears, but neither of them had recognised a note. Lady Margaret coloured, laughed a little hysterical laugh, and then said, in her prettiest mincing tones:

"Well, my dearest Mary, there is no denying it, I was, I confess rather inattentive, but the fault is all Mr. Delamere's. He has been giving me such a delightful

account of the odd people who are making a noise in the world; and then, which is positively shocking, he is such an admirer of French ladies."

"And why is it shocking?"

"Because they wear their corsets *à la Diane*, and talk a great deal in company."

"Neither, my dear Margaret, is a very deadly offence."

"Bless me, Mary! can you defend the antique costume?"

"And why should I not? It has been universally adopted by the sculptors of all ages, and that universal adoption is the best evidence of its grace."

"But then it is so dreadfully incorrect."

"It is not necessarily so. Every female dress may be made incorrect by the bad taste of the wearer. It has become the fashion to make classical costume the object of our fierce criticism, but we should have acted more wisely, if instead of applying the severity of our remarks to the drapery,

we had directed it against those who misused it."

"But that is not the worst. Mr. Delamere says that the French women speak a great deal."

"Ill nature," said Mary, in her usual quiet tone, "will allege that that is a quality which is not peculiar to the sex in France."

"Yes, but you misunderstand me. I don't deny that girls in England (now, Mr. Delamere, you must shut your ears, for it is not intended that you should hear this), do flirt a little, when they have an agreeable partner; but that is a very different thing to speaking to from fifteen to twenty people at a time."

"Very different."

"You agree with me then. You think the French fashion is very immodest."

"I do not. I do not see that there is greater immodesty in speaking to twenty people than in speaking to one."

"Oh! my dear Mary, how shocking!

an English woman would never do any thing so out of rule. Speak to twenty people, indeed! What could an English woman find to say to them?"

"Probably nothing."

"Ah, love! I knew you would agree with me. We never could do such things. We are so much more modest."

"Ignorance, my dear Margaret, is not modesty, though it sometimes finds it convenient to call itself so."

"Ignorance! We ignorant!"

"Yes, supremely so."

"Oh! Mary! Oh! Mr. Delamere, how can you suffer her to say such things."

Mary's mouth was so beautiful, that Frank in his heart thought there would be nothing more agreeable than having the privilege of stopping it after his own fashion. He did not say so, however, he only gave a faint smile, and resumed his gravity.

"Yes," said Miss Staunton, laughing. "This is an old crotchet of mine, and Mr.

Delamere is well acquainted with it. I have ever held that the minds of our sex are equal to those of the other, and the example of France is the best proof of it. We should not perhaps make as good philosophers as men, our judgment may be less sound, and in the inductive sciences, we may be their inferiors; but we have as good memories as they have, we have finer sensibilities, quicker observation, greater powers of language, in three fourths, in short, of those qualities which influence society, we are naturally their superiors."

"Oh! Mary, Mary, what will Mr. Delamere think of you?"

"Probably that I speak the truth. But if he doubted it, I would appeal to his acquaintance with history, and ask him, if for the last two hundred years, women have not exercised a greater influence in France than in England; if in fact from the days of the Duchesses of Longueville and Montpensier, down to those of Madame Recamier and

Madame de Stael, women have not ruled the French monarchy—French politics—French society."

"And how?"

"Simply by that which ever rules society—superior knowledge. It was that which gave to the priesthood their power during the dark ages—it is that which has for two hundred years given it to women in France, and it is the absence of that which, for a corresponding period, has made the influence of our sex in England a blank."

Mary had got beyond Lady Margaret, so the daughter of Lord Torrisdale, instead of replying, turned to Frank with a look of appeal. The eyes were eloquent, if the lips were not, and the *preux chevalier* rushed to the rescue.

"I do not deny," said he, "the talents of Madame de Longueville and her fair sisterhood, nor do I question their information or their power, and yet they scarce deserve to be the objects of the eulogiums of Miss Staun-

ton. She cannot, I am sure, respect their morals, and if they had influence, still less can she admire the purposes for which that influence was used."

"I do neither, but the badness of both does not affect my argument. I said simply that women had from nature intelligence, which, if it were cultivated, would make them men's social equals. I say so still. French women have possessed, and do possess that intelligence, and have abused it. But the occasional abuse is no argument against its value. Does Mr. Delamere not recollect that splendid passage uttered, but a month since, by Mr. Erskine, in one of his great jury speeches, 'Tempests may occasionally ruin our crops or devastate our dwellings, but they sweep before them the lazy atmosphere that otherwise would stagnate into pestilence.' And so it is with female intelligence. It may occasionally be misdirected, or applied to unworthy objects, but its full development is necessary for the

happiness and dignity of humanity. And till it is fully developed in England, we shall neither secure to our own sex the position to which it is entitled, or enable the other to master the great objects for which God has created them."

"Oh! dear Mary, how very vain you are to say so. How could you suppose that men, who are so much cleverer than we are, could be affected by any thing we could say or do."

"And are they not so? Is not the child the father to the man? and does not that child's future lot depend on his first impressions—his most lasting ones. What care is taken to assure their excellence? or how can a boy acquire from his mother just ideas of what is great and noble, if the mother herself do not possess them! No! my dear Margaret, as the rusty iron corrodes with its touch the polished steel, so the uninformed mind, by constant association, ever debases

the informed one, and a thousand great enterprises are nipped in the bud, because the man who planned them chances to have for his partner, one who estimates as the highest dignities of life, parading a drawing-room on the arm of an ambassador, or having a command for a Queen's ball."

Mary had spoken with something of bitterness, and it might be of pedantry, but a woman when she values a man's good opinion, is naturally anxious to exhibit herself to advantage. Lady Margaret had monopolised Frank for the evening, and by her syren arts had made him deaf to the charms of the piano; and the heiress of Staunton Lodge was perhaps not sorry to have an opportunity of shewing to her guest how entirely the brilliant qualities of her fair cousin were upon the surface.

It is possible that the voice of the speaker had been raised to a louder tone than usual, for it roused her father from

his slumbers, and the old gentleman sitting up in his arm chair, and rubbing his eyes, asked what was the matter.

"Nothing, my dear Sir," said Lady Margaret, glad to have an opportunity of changing the conversation in which she felt painfully conscious of her inferiority. "Nothing, only Mary has been overwhelming us. She has become so dreadfully wise."

"And what," said the old gentleman, "has she been talking about?"

"About French women. She says they are so superior to us."

"And did you agree with her?"

"Not for a wilderness of monkeys. I think English women and English men," and her eye glanced towards Frank, "are superior to all the rest of the world."

"And so do I," said the old gentleman. "There is not a spot on earth like old England. Where will you find such broad cloths and such calicos. The *draps de berri* and the Indian stuffs, and nankins, are not

to compare with them. But I should like very much to have heard what Mr. Delamere said about France. I dare say he told you the best mode of supplying it with British manufactures, in spite of that rascal Boney. Odds faith! I got more information from him to-night about Hamburgh and the Elbe and the cleverest way of getting quit of my bales, and doing the mounseers, than ever I got in my life. You must have benefited much, girls, by his conversation, for he has a first rate mercantile head, and if he goes on as he has begun, I should not wonder," said the old man with a wink, "to see him some day or other, a partner of the house of Willis and Staunton."

Mary's and Frank's eyes met. Both flushed crimson, and then became deadly pale. Fortunately, the bed-room candlesticks appeared at the moment, and the young heiress took advantage of their arrival to hurry from the room. What were the thoughts of the gentleman with regard to

the future partnership, it would be difficult to guess. Those of the lady had certainly no reference either to day-book or ledger. Frank was happier than he dreamed of, and the heir of the Delameres, in his most palmy days had never so fair a chance of winning the lady of his love, as now when he was only Mr. Staunton's clerk.

Oh, Lady Margaret, Lady Margaret, how naughty of you to go a flirting, and make your cousin jealous!

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